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ENGLAND IN THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR

A STUDY IN COMBINED STRATEGY

BY

SIR JULIAN S. CORBETT

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

SECOND EDITION

LONDON
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PREFACE

In the following pages an attempt has been made to present Pitt's War as it was seen and felt by the men who were concerned with its direction. In every Chancellery in Europe, as well as in our own Cabinet, this part of the widespread Seven Years' War was always spoken of as the "Maritime War"; and it would seem that no useful apprehension of the way in which it was conducted can be attained unless it be approached from the naval side rather than from the military, as is more commonly done. The Continental theatre of the war proved so rich in brilliant actions—at sea they were so few—that this aspect of the struggle, so fertile in instruction for ourselves, has come to be somewhat unduly obscured. It is true that as an example of the trite doctrine of the influence of sea power we know it well enough. But it is not there that its living value ends. For the actual strategical use of the fleet, and for the principles and even the practice of amphibious warfare, it is as luminously informing as, in their own special sphere, are the subordinate campaigns of Frederick the Great. By this of course it is not meant that the share which the army so abundantly contributed to the result should be neglected or minimised, but only that for a right consideration of the war the army must be regarded primarily as forming an integral part of the maritime force with which it was carried on.

In endeavouring to recover the principles of the art which were so real and familiar to its old masters in

those days, it has been found unavoidable to introduce a certain amount of strategical exposition. For this some apology is due to civilian readers. A less technical and more epic treatment of the great contest for maritime empire would doubtless have received a kindlier welcome. Yet in mitigation of the literary transgression it may be urged, even for those who read history for its romance, for its drama and its poetry, that surely the deepest notes of what they seek can only be heard when we watch great men of action struggling, as in some old Greek tragedy, with the inexorable laws of strategy, or riding on them in mastery to the inevitable catastrophe. That success in so presenting the story has been attained it would be mere presumption to expect. All that can be hoped is that those who have ears for the real music of a great historical theme will not resent the sober cadences, without which it cannot be developed.

To officers in the sister services I trust no apology is needed, except to express a most genuine sense of temerity in treading upon ground so full of pitfalls for a civilian. My only excuse is the ungrudging help, criticism, and encouragement which I have received from them in the course of lecturing on the subject-matter of the book at the Naval War College and elsewhere. Surely never did man learn more fully the truth of the old adage, *Homines dum docent discunt.* I would only beg that if any technical merits be found they may be set down to them. The errors are assuredly my own.

To Captain E. J. Warre Slade, R.N., lately Captain of the War College, and now Director of Naval Intelligence, I owe in this sense more than I can well express. With his ever-ready assistance every point in the story has been thrashed out, and it is not too much

to say that without the support of his broad knowledge of the art of war, and his sure judgment, the task would have been beyond my powers.

It is impossible, moreover, to let this attempt—such as it is—go from my hands without acknowledging the deep debt I owe to M. Richard Waddington and his entirely admirable work on *La Guerre de Sept Ans.* Unfortunately it is not yet finished, and probably none can appreciate its extraordinary value quite in the same way as one who lost its sure guidance in the midst of a diplomatic wilderness.

Second only to this obligation is my debt to Mr. Doughty and his almost exhaustive monograph on the *Siege of Quebec.* To this would be added Miss Kemball's *Correspondence of William Pitt with Colonial Governors, &c., in America,* but for the fact that it was not accessible until this part of my work was completed. For this reason it will seldom be found quoted in the notes, though almost all the documents cited for the American theatre are to be found in its pages.

For new material my gratitude is above all due to the Marquis of Lansdowne, who most generously and with every facility permitted me to consult the invaluable Viri-Solar correspondence in his possession. Without access to this series of documents it would have been practically impossible to give anything like an adequate view of the final negotiations for peace.

With regard to other manuscript sources it may be said, for those who are unfamiliar with our records, that the *Newcastle* and *Hardwicke Papers,* and all others cited from the *Additional MSS.,* are in the British Museum. Documents cited as *Chatham Papers* are from the manuscript collection of Pitt's correspondence, &c., deposited in the hands of the Historical MSS. Commissioners at the

Record Office, and they are to be distinguished from the selection of them in the *Chatham Correspondence*, edited by Taylor and Pringle in 1840. Similarly, the *Mitchell Papers* in the British Museum are to be distinguished from the selection printed in the *Mitchell Memoirs* by Bissett in 1850. The references to *Bedford*, *Grenville*, and *Rockingham* papers are all to the printed editions. The diplomatic, colonial, naval, and military despatches and official papers are in the Record Office, classed respectively as *State Papers Foreign*, *State Papers Colonial*, *Admiralty Secretary In-* and *Out-Letters*, *War Office In-* and *Out-Letters*. In the same place will be found the ships' *Logs* and officers' *Journals* (*Admirals'* and *Captains'*), *Intercepted Correspondence*, *Secret Orders*, &c. Scholars will note with reprehension that some of these papers are quoted not from the originals, but from official copies in the Newcastle or other correspondence. For this I can plead no defence, except the amenities and prompt service of the Manuscript Room of the British Museum as compared with the lingering discomforts (to say no more) of the sepulchre provided for students at the Record Office, aggravated by the prohibition of ink.

In preparing the index, for which I have to thank Mr. Herbert E. Corbett, a special aim has been to render it of service for biographical reference, and it will sometimes be found of assistance where the rank or position of an officer or statesman mentioned in the text is not sufficiently explained for those unfamiliar with the period.

J. S. C.

Nov. 1907.

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ENGLAND IN THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY—THE FUNCTION OF THE FLEET IN WAR

To those who seek insight into the higher principles of the Art of War there is no contest more full of matter—at least for a maritime power—than that in which, under the guidance of the elder Pitt, the expansion of England made its most commanding stride. Opinions, it is true, will always differ as to how far history can be of practical value for such a purpose at all. It can be argued, with at least some show of reason, that the revolution which has taken place in naval material during recent years has put the old wars out of court. Yet, no matter to what greater or less extent that view may be tenable, there must still remain one part of the subject that such changes can never affect; and it is here the Seven Years' War stands in our history without a rival.

Reaching higher and wider than what is usually understood by naval strategy, it is a branch of the art as vital for statesmen as it is for sailors, for diplomatists as it is for soldiers, and by history alone can it be mastered. We may term it the function of the fleet in war. Marshalled in its place in the art of war, it will be seen to form, together with the functions of

the army and diplomacy, a part of what is called the higher or major strategy, and to bear much the same relation to naval strategy as minor strategy does to tactics. For naval strategy, which is commonly and conveniently confined to the movements of the fleet in a theatre of war, is really a form of minor strategy; and while tactics are concerned with the arena of a battle, and minor strategy with the arena of a campaign, so the study of the functions of the fleet is concerned with the whole arena of an international struggle.

How widely it differs from simple naval strategy a practical illustration will show. Naval strategy is studied on a chart. To solve its problems we note the conformation of coast-lines, we note the lie of strategical positions, of naval bases, of the courses and converging points of trade routes; we measure sea distances and add up naval units, and eliminating moral frictions the factors of our problems are complete. But in the study of the functions of a fleet a chart is useless. It cuts off our vision just where the most obscure and difficult part of the study begins. For it is behind the coast-line that are at work the dominant factors by which the functions of a fleet are determined. The whole study of them is based on the relations of the coast-lines to the lines of land communication, to the diplomatic tensions and the political centres of the struggle, to the lines and theatres of military operations ashore. For the study, therefore, of the functions of a fleet, charts will not suffice. It is a map we want, upon which both land and sea are shown, a map in which the political features are at least as prominently marked as the physical.

The difference and relation between the two studies may be stated in yet another way. Naval strategy studied on a chart is comparable to pure mathematics.

It sets itself as it were upon a clean slate to solve certain problems of naval warfare, without regard to the deflecting influences of military or diplomatic considerations. The usual definitions display it as concerned with obtaining command of the sea, with combinations for overpowering the enemy's main fleet and the like. All this is right enough on occasions, but only on occasions, and the occasions are rare. It is very seldom we have had a clean slate to work on—never indeed for long except in purely maritime wars, waged for a purely maritime object, such as were our wars in the seventeenth century with the Dutch. As an episode the clean slate may also occur in mixed wars, but only as a passing episode: that is, there may be moments in the most complex war when the destruction of the enemy's main fleet and the securing of the command of a certain sea may be of an importance so great and pressing that naval action may rightly be left free to concern itself with nothing else, and every consideration of diplomatic and military operations must rest subservient to naval strategy. When such rare moments occur, they are invariably so dazzling in their dramatic intensity as to dull our vision of what they really mean and how they were brought about. The imagination comes naturally to concentrate itself upon such supreme catastrophes and to forget that war is not made up of them. Historians, greedy of dramatic effect, encourage such concentrations of attention, and the result is that the current conception of the functions of a fleet is dangerously narrowed, and our best minds cramp their strategical view by assuming unconsciously that the sole function of a fleet is to win battles at sea. That this is the supreme function of a fleet is certain, and it must never be lost sight of; but on the other hand it must not be forgotten that convenient

opportunities of winning a battle do not always occur when they are wanted. The great dramatic moments of naval strategy have to be worked for, and the first preoccupation of the fleet will almost always be to bring them about by interference with the enemy's military and diplomatic arrangements.

An illustration will serve best to exhibit the matter more clearly. The War of the Spanish Succession, as it was regarded at the time, was a war to decide whether or not the Mediterranean was to be a Bourbon lake under the control of France. At first sight it would appear that such a war was peculiarly the province of naval strategy—in other words, that it was a question of securing the command of the sea by the destruction of the enemy's fleets. But William the Third, with his remarkable grasp of the higher strategy, saw further. He saw that the permanent control of that sea was a question of naval and military positions, and that the first and most pressing function of the fleet was, not to defeat the enemy's fleet, but to secure the adhesion of Savoy and Portugal to the Grand Alliance. Both objects would, of course, have been obtained by a decisive naval victory. But France, being inferior in naval force, was careful to give no opportunity for such a victory. She assumed a strict defensive which placed her fleets beyond our reach, and we were forced to secure the vital positions in the face of her undefeated navy. No sooner was this done than France found herself forced to break her defensive, and the battle of Malaga was the result. Tactically it was indecisive, but it was enough to show France that she was powerless to recover the ground she had lost, and it caused her to abandon all serious naval effort. Here, then, was a case where all the advantages of the command of the sea were gained by a bold move

in the face of a fleet in being, and retained without ever defeating that fleet. The defeat of the enemy's fleet was clearly not the first object of our naval activity. The function which the fleet was sent out to discharge was primarily diplomatic, and the enemy's fleet was to be ignored so long as it did not interfere.

From such instances as these, and they are many, it is evident that we require for the guidance of our naval policy and naval action something of wider vision than the current conception of naval strategy, something that will keep before our eyes not merely the enemy's fleets or the great routes of commerce, or the command of the sea, but also the relations of naval policy and action to the whole area of diplomatic and military effort. Of late years the world has become so deeply impressed with the efficacy of sea power that we are inclined to forget how impotent it is of itself to decide a war against great Continental states, how tedious is the pressure of naval action unless it be nicely co-ordinated with military and diplomatic pressure. It was fifteen years after the defeat of the Armada before we could obtain peace with Spain, even on the *status quo ante bellum*. It was ten years after Trafalgar before revolutionary France accepted defeat. "We English," wrote Nelson in the Gulf of Genoa, where he was first brought face to face with the ultimate problems of his art, "we English have to regret that we cannot always decide the fate of Empires on the sea."[1]

Certainly it is still a fact to be regretted, and for that reason also a fact never to be forgotten in naval policy. Nor need we ever lose hold of so vital a truth if, instead of endeavouring to find our formula for naval strategy deductively, we turn to history, that is, to past

[1] To the Hon. John Trevor, April 28, 1796 (Nicolas, vii. lx.).

experience of great wars, and find out what actually happened. Instead of cramping our outlook by well-turned definitions, let us inquire of history what in past wars the functions of the fleet have actually been, what the actual objects for which it has been employed. For all that long series of wars which gave Great Britain first her position in Europe, and then in the world, the answer is simple and constant. The function of the fleet, the object for which it was always employed, has been threefold: firstly, to support or obstruct diplomatic effort; secondly, to protect or destroy commerce; and thirdly, to further or hinder military operations ashore. Here, then, we get a formula widely different from the current definitions of naval strategy. The distorting influence of the enemy's main fleet is reduced as it becomes obvious that we have to think of many things beyond securing the command of the sea. We begin to distinguish more clearly between the means and the end of naval policy. In most cases it is true that to secure the command of the sea by destroying the enemy's fleets is the best way of ensuring that your own fleet will be in a position to discharge its threefold functions. But the historical method reveals at once that the command of the sea is only a means to an end. It never has been, and never can be, the end itself. Yet obvious as this is, it is constantly lost sight of in naval policy. We forget what really happened in the old wars; we blind ourselves by looking only on the dramatic moments of naval history; we come unconsciously to assume that the defeat of the enemy's fleets solves all problems, and that we are always free and able to apply this apparently simple solution. Thus, until quite recent years, naval thought had tended to confine itself to the perfection of the weapon and to neglect the art of using it. Or, in other words, it had

come to feel its sole concern was fighting, and had forgotten the art of making war.

Now, as Nelson lamented, where great empires are concerned, wars cannot be concluded upon the sea. Such wars cannot be made by fleets alone. But just as land operations demand the co-operation and just co-ordination of horse, foot, and artillery, and as sea operations demand the co-operation and just co-ordination of battleships, cruisers, and flotillas, so are great wars conducted by the ordered combination of naval, military, and diplomatic force. Thus naval strategy, so long as it merely contemplates bringing the enemy's fleet to successful action and securing the command of the sea, may often miss its most potent line of energy, and operating as it were single-handed, it may fail to achieve a point in the war which combined or co-ordinated action would have given it. An admiral with no wider outlook than to regard the enemy's fleet as his primary objective will miss his true relation to the other forces which are working for a successful issue of the war; he will be unable to see all the conditions of the problem before him in their true proportions; and will be unable to construe his orders or to decide in an unforeseen situation with a thorough grasp of the common object. Hence the importance of approaching the study of maritime warfare not from the point of view of what is usually understood by naval strategy, but from the wider standpoint of the functions of the fleet.

It is for this purpose that the Seven Years' War has so high a value. During the world-wide struggle in which the main lines of the British Empire were finally laid down, we were from first to last in marked superiority at sea to our enemy. From first to last we were more or less free to use the fleet directly upon the ulterior

objects of the war, and throughout the struggle what are called the primary functions—that is, the domination of the enemy's main fleet—scarcely ever rose above the level of containing operations. Thus, at least from the time when Pitt obtained control of the war, its conduct exhibits the diverse functions of the fleet in full or co-ordinated activity. He was a true War Minister with almost undisturbed control of army, navy, and diplomacy, and in his hands we see the fleet slipping neatly into its place, shoulder to shoulder with its comrades. It is never used without some close relation to a military or diplomatic end, and conversely the army and diplomacy are always being worked to secure some point which will either strengthen the naval position or relieve the fleet of some irksome preoccupation. Here lay the pith of what Pitt called his "system." Assured of his practical superiority at sea, he permitted no pedantic insistence on the primary naval objective. There was no waiting till the enemy's mobile sea forces were absolutely disposed of before the army was put in action. For Pitt army and navy were the blade and hilt of one weapon, and from the moment the weapon was in his grip he began to demonstrate the force and reach of his method. Not only was he able without destroying the enemy's naval force to strike beyond the ocean at the ulterior object, but at home he was able to break down the time-honoured strategy of France, and force her, by goading her into a desperate attempt at invasion, to deliver her main fleets into his hands.

It is all a most brilliant lesson of the way in which the weak army of a strong naval power can be used, of how great Continental armies may be made to feel the shock of fleets, and of how mere superiority at sea may be made to thwart Continental cabinets, to tangle their

strategy and upset their moral balance. It was a lesson all too soon forgotten. In the last great struggle with revolutionary France and Napoleon, nothing is more exasperating than the way in which Ministers let slip and misused opportunities such as were the very breath of Pitt's system. Yet that oblivion is scarcely surprising when we think with what violence Pitt had to force his views on his colleagues and his King. Indeed it would seem that it was only the instinct of the people for amphibious warfare that enabled him to carry his point. That instinct was behind him, and possibly it was that which at first set in motion his opposition to what was called the Continental school rather than any well-reasoned strategical convictions. But it is abundantly clear from the despatches of the time that he very soon came to see clearly how true the instinct was, and upon what sound strategical reasons it was based. And so it came about that of all our wars there is none beside Pitt's war which is so radiant with the genius of a maritime state, and none which was so uniformly successful.

CHAPTER II

NATURE AND OBJECT OF THE WAR

"A most ill-judged advertisement from the War Office has set all the ministers on fire and made them believe we are going to war, which is, I hope, the furthest from our thoughts." So on October 10, 1754, the Duke of Newcastle, First Lord of the Treasury to King George the Second, wrote to the Earl of Albemarle, his ambassador in Paris. The latest news from America had been so serious that the Government had resolved secretly to reinforce the Colonial garrisons, and the War Office had let the secret out. So Albemarle was urged to represent the measures that were being taken as purely defensive, and to do all he could to preserve the peace, consistently with the necessary measures for securing our position in North America. "Excuse this free letter," Newcastle concluded in apology for disturbing the suavity of diplomatic intercourse with so much earnestness, "but we are on a precipice. I am sure you will keep us out if you can, and I think you may."

How far Newcastle saw into the precipice that yawned at his feet, it is difficult to say, but in its depths lay that mighty drama, which George Washington had already opened in the obscurity of the Ohio solitudes, and which he was to end in triumph before all the world with his Declaration of Independence. What Newcastle saw was much less. For him the last news meant that the violence of the English and French Colonial authorities

had given an ugly turn to certain negotiations which had been leisurely progressing ever since the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle had brought the War of the Austrian Succession to an end in 1748. That peace, which purported to settle so much, and which practically settled nothing even in Europe, had left everything that mattered undecided in America. The Plenipotentiaries had washed their hands of the dull and obscure questions at issue between France and England in the Far West by leaving the frontier between Nova Scotia and Canada to be defined subsequently, and by constituting as a neutral buffer between Canada and New England an ill-defined tract of Indian territory which stretched down indeterminately into the hinterland of Pennsylvania and Virginia. Such an arrangement was, of course, no better than leaving the colonists to fight it out amongst themselves, and this they incontinently set to work to do, while a Delimitation Commission pretended to be doing the work more decently at home.

With the rights and wrongs of the two cases, founded as they were on Indian treaties, prior discovery, trading rights, and all the paraphernalia of what we now call peaceful penetration, we have nothing to do. Out of the mountains of papers in which the question was reduced to impenetrable obscurity, one fact emerges which alone is material. From causes which are above all war and diplomacy and peaceful penetration, the position for which France was striving was absolutely impossible. On the one hand were the dreaming settlements of the French thinly spread along the banks of the St. Lawrence, and occupied by a poor and sparse population, content in idyllic submission to priests and officials. On the other the restless, almost rebellious British Colonies along the Atlantic seaboard, by com-

parison with Canada thriving, populous, and enterprising, each playing strenuously for its own hand, seething with the movement of well-established adolescence, and pressing by sheer force of a natural expansion farther and farther into the interior. Yet this force, which we can now see to have been as irresistible as the tide, it was the dream of France to stem by fine-drawn arguments that had no real foundation, and trivial military movements which she had no means of supporting. The grandiose scheme which Galissonière, her sailor governor, had conceived, was based on her claim to the whole basin of the Mississippi—a claim which she founded on having been the first to navigate its waters, and which she asserted by the sickly little settlement of New Orleans at its mouth. Could New Orleans be connected with Montreal by a chain of posts, the whole of this vast territory which formed the hinterland of the English Colonies would be occupied effectively, according to French ideas, and Virginia and the rest would be cut off from all further growth.

How often since the period of Imperial expansion began has France found herself too late, and how often has she sought to recover her ground by such imaginative schemes. When she had roused herself to take her place in the great game that was beginning, she had found England in possession of all that was worth having along the North American coast. Unobtrusive forces had been at work of which she had taken no note till too late, and it was just these forces which Galissonière's great dream ignored. Yet there is something in the spirit that can conceive, and not only conceive but steadfastly work for such lofty purposes, that compels admiration. Again and again it has been the lot of England to bring such schemes to ruin, and yet, brutal as has been the process

of destruction compared with what it destroyed, we still and always have a bow for the men of ideas and their wide-flung strategic conceptions.

The weak point of the French design was, as we have said, that it took no count of the unruly forces that had forestalled their own endeavours. Indeed it was characteristic of the logical French mind to ignore what had not been reduced to logical form, and the forces that lay squandering in disorder amongst the English Colonies were as formless as the wind. Yet they were there vigorous, if blind as ever, and it was inevitable that sooner or later the acute insinuation of the French would reach a point where it would be felt like the stab of a goad, and those forces would begin to take order and direction.

The last news from America was that such a point had been reached. It was just the point where a more practical strategy, taking higher account of men than maps, would have seen Galissonière's scheme must break down. The weak link in the French chain was in that wedge of country which lies between the converging lines of Lake Erie and the Alleghany Mountains, and through which flow the Bull River, the Alleghany, and the Monongahela, till they meet in the head waters of Ohio, at the point where Pittsburg now stands. From New Orleans north-eastward to this point by way of the Mississippi and its great tributary all was plain sailing, and so it was from Montreal south-westward by the St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario to Lake Erie. But between the southern shore of Lake Erie and the head waters of the Ohio lay a danger zone that had to be made good, and it was just at this point that the English Colonies of Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania pressed most closely into the French design.

In the spring of 1753 the Marquis Duquesne had

come out as governor, in succession to Galissonière, with instructions to do all he could to clear the English out of the disputed region, and had sent an expedition to secure the head waters of the Ohio.[1] It did not reach its objective, but succeeded in establishing a fort at Presquisle, on the shores of Lake Erie, close to where the Bull River begins its course to the Ohio. Advancing down the Bull River they established two more posts, expelling or taking prisoner the English traders whom they found in their way. Now it so happened that these same traders were mostly agents of the English Ohio Company, which was engaged in opening up a trade route to the great lakes, and its principal shareholders were the magnates of Virginia and Maryland, who had a concession of the Indian trade from the Crown. Here then was the inevitable jar. Duquesne's scientific penetration had come in conflict with the stubborn commercial spirit of his rivals, and the plot thickened fast. While the French, elated by their success, advanced to the Alleghany River and established a post there, George Washington was sent to protest, and Dinwiddie, Governor of Virginia, prepared to despatch a military force into the Ohio basin to prevent any fresh posts being established by the French. Washington's mission was of course a failure, and as a counter-move the colony of Virginia voted £10,000 for a force to establish a fort at the head of the Ohio. By April 1754 the force had reached its destination, and was hard at work upon the fort from which Pittsburg was to spring, when they were surprised by the French advancing in superior force down the Alleghany and were compelled to retire. On the half-finished works of the British the French founded their famous Fort

[1] Waddington, *Louis XV. et le renversement des Alliances*, pp. 20.

PART OF
NORTH AMERICA
showing
BRITISH, FRENCH & SPANISH POSSESSIONS
AT THE OPENING OF THE WAR.
Statute Miles
0 100 200 300 400
British
French
Spanish
CANADA
ATLANTIC OCEAN
Gulf of Mexico
Lake Superior
Lake Michigan
Lake Huron
L. Ontario
Lake Erie
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NEWFOUNDLAND
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Mississippi
Ohio
Allegheny Mts
Fort de Chartres
Fort Duquesne
Fort Cumberland
Fort Niagara
Fort Frontenac
Crown Point
Ticonderoga
Oswego
Albany
Fort Pitt
Fort Detroit
Fort Presque de l'Isle
Fort Le Boeuf
Fort Machault
Fort Venango
Fort Sandusky
Fort Miamis
Fort St Marie
Fort Chambly
Fort St John
Fort Beauséjour
Fort Edward
Fort Lawrence
Fort Cumberland
Fort Halifax
Fort Pownall
Fort Richmond
Fort Shirley
Fort Loudoun
Fort Prince George
Fort Augusta
Fort Granville
Fort Bedford
Fort Ligonier
Fort Burd
Fort Cumberland
Fort Frederick
Fort Dobbs
Fort Johnston
Fort Granville
Fort Moore
Fort Augusta
Fort Ninety Six
Fort Charlotte

Duquesne, and the last link of their chain was forged. Obviously it must be broken at once, and without more ado Washington, at the head of the Virginian forces, attacked the French commander. His strength was as inadequate, his equipment as imperfect as was to be expected. He was forced to retreat and finally to surrender at Fort Necessity, on the western slopes of the Alleghanies. This was the news which had forced from the Duke of Newcastle his "free" letter to Lord Albemarle, and it was no wonder. For, though no one yet grasped it, the Seven Years' War had begun.

It is an easy exercise, and one in which historians and others have freely indulged themselves, to contrast the triumphant manner in which Pitt waged the war at its zenith with the lame opening of Newcastle. No reflections, while being broadly justified, could be more misleading. Because Pitt's methods were heroic in their direct and ruthless energy beside the well-bred decorum of Newcastle's, we are apt to assume that as a War Minister Newcastle was wholly ridiculous. In his methods perhaps he was, but not in the broad lines of his strategy. In them, so far at least as his opening moves were concerned, there is little to condemn; and as for the energy of his measures, the wonder is that, seeing how lowering was the horizon against which he saw the Ohio affair projected, he went to work as strenuously as he did.

To judge Newcastle aright, and derive from his conduct the full instruction that it contains, we must rigidly forget everything that happened afterwards, and try to see the situation exactly as it presented itself to a statesman of average ability in the autumn of 1754. Turn back to his letter to Albemarle; we get the pith of the difficulty at once. To English eyes, whatever else

was in dispute, it was absolutely beyond question that we had the right to trade in the buffer Indian territory. The behaviour of Duquesne's expedition in the Ohio valley was therefore unpardonable, and in face of such an outrage Newcastle could not but believe, as he told Albemarle, that it must have arisen from "the enterprising genius" of the French governors, and possibly not from orders from home. This was the first point to decide. It was hoped that the measures already determined on would clear the situation. General Braddock was under orders to proceed to America as commander-in-chief, with two regiments of the line, to stiffen the Colonial defence. At the same time the local forces were to be increased, and Albemarle was to watch the effect of the step on the French Government. It is clear that Newcastle hoped the firmness that was being shown would bring a disavowal from the Court of Versailles. If it failed to do so, the next step was one of extreme difficulty; for, as Newcastle anxiously explained to Albemarle, if the French endorsed Duquesne's action, it would be a highly delicate matter to expel his men by force. If that were done, as the troubled Minister wrote, "We then begin the war."

It is these words that contain the crux of the whole situation, the explanation of the halting way in which we seem to have entered the war, and beneath them lies one of its most valuable lessons, how military and naval strategy are confused and deflected by political considerations. Till their meaning is fully grasped, it is impossible to do justice to Newcastle and the strategy of his expert advisers, who were amongst the wisest and most experienced we ever had—Granville and Hardwicke, Anson and Boscawen, Cumberland and Ligonier. They also bring home to us, when rightly understood, the living

interest of the war, and show it to us in an essentially modern aspect. To-day we have grown accustomed to the abiding fear lest some far-off Colonial rivalry between two nations may serve to throw the delicately balanced machinery of international relations out of gear and drag the whole world into war. So great and well known is the danger now that the highest diplomacy of our own day is perhaps the art of isolating such disputes. It was scarcely less so then; and when Newcastle wrote that anxious phrase, "We then begin the war," his eyes were fixed on the lowering cloud that hung over Europe, knowing well how easily the most distant disturbance might cause it to burst into uncontrollable storm.

It was but six years since the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle had brought the last general war to its restless conclusion, and it was fresh in the minds of European statesmen that that tangled struggle had begun in a Colonial quarrel between England and Spain. It was generally felt that the peace was no better than an armed truce that contented nobody—nobody, indeed, except perhaps Frederick the Great, to whom at Austria's expense was confirmed his ill-gotten conquest of Silesia. But that scarcely made matters better, for it was round Silesia that the most dangerous storm-centre lay. The contentment of Frederick was really the most disturbing fact of the situation, and was only another word for the aggrandisement of Prussia, and Austria's thirst for revenge. Indeed the rise of the new military monarchy to the rank of a first-rate power, with no preoccupation in its foreign policy but an almost savage instinct of self-preservation, was the fresh and most incalculable factor in the situation.

As for France, she had reasons for resenting the peace

only less galling than those of Austria. During the war she had succeeded in gaining the object of her traditional policy by making a thorough conquest of the Netherlands. But far away beyond the Atlantic, English colonists had torn from her grasp Cape Breton Island and Louisbourg. Now Louisbourg was to France and her Canadian possessions what Port Arthur recently was for Russia in the Far East. It was absolutely necessary for her Colonial future to regain it, and the price she had to pay for re-entry was the retrocession of the Netherlands. Hard as the bargain seemed to France, it was scarcely less welcome to England, while by the New Englanders, who, with the aid of the Royal Navy, had made the invaluable conquest, it was deeply resented. They knew well enough that, so long as the Mother Country was dominant at sea, the possession of Louisbourg placed the whole of the French possessions on the St. Lawrence at their mercy, and they could not see what they gained by sacrificing it in order that Austria might regain the Netherlands. It was difficult to see that it was all a question of naval policy, that it was surrendering a naval position of comparatively small value, except offensively, for others that were indispensable for defence. It may almost be said that the dominant note of English foreign policy from time immemorial had been to prevent either France or Spain securing naval stations beyond the Straits of Dover. It is upon what may be called the virginity of the Dover defile that the strength of England's maritime position depends, and no other conceivable naval position could be too valuable to sacrifice so that this one might be preserved intact. Thus, though it seemed that Austria gained by recovering her Netherlands and the Flemish ports, it was really England who gained, and the Colonies,

whose security depended on the integrity of the Mother Country's naval position in the Narrow Seas.

In surveying the situation in Europe, if we would understand the feelings of Newcastle and the British Government as they stood on the brink of the precipice, no point is more important than this. Unless it is kept firmly in mind, it is impossible to trace the subtle thread of English naval policy through the Continental phases of the struggle. The instinct for keeping France from any naval outlet in the North Sea was, as we have noted, the main tradition of English foreign policy. It was at the root of the old Burgundian alliance, and it was at the root of that triple alliance with Holland and Austria with which William the Third and his pupil Marlborough had worked the levers of Europe. It was at the root of that strangely unstable arrangement known as the "Barrier Fortresses," and it was at the root of that galling condition of peace which we had twice wrung from France that she should destroy the port and defences of Dunkirk. Both these arrangements were the source of perpetual irritation, and it is the strongest evidence of the importance which England attached to their object that she should have insisted on forcing such humiliating terms upon two of the first powers in Europe.

The meaning of the "Barrier Fortresses" was this. To hand over the Netherlands to Austria was not to secure the country from France. It lay too excentrically from the seat of Austrian power to be defended by her alone. She therefore had to agree to put a line of fortresses on the French frontier in the hands of Dutch garrisons, and to pay those garrisons herself, while as a further consideration for what the sea powers had done for her she had to agree not to trade to India from her

Flemish ports. This insufferable arrangement, which had originated in the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, had never been a success, and had now become almost a dead letter. The works of the fortresses had been allowed to fall into decay, the garrisons were unpaid, and at Ostend an East India Company had been established. To make matters worse, France had begun to restore the works of Dunkirk. It was clear something must be done. As a first step to face the threatening storm, negotiations had been opened with Austria to renew the Barrier Treaty on a more satisfactory footing, but at present it looked as if the negotiations were more likely to destroy the last traces of the traditional alliance than to secure the traditional position. The Empress Maria Theresa indeed was in favour of accepting the terms of the "Sea Powers," but her husband the Emperor and his adviser Kaunitz were against it. Every day Kaunitz, who was to show himself the acutest foreign politician in Europe, was gaining ground, and before the end of the year Newcastle was writing to Bentinck, our ambassador at Vienna: "I see the great system on the point of being dissolved."[1] If this should happen, he foresaw that Holland, for her self-preservation, would be driven into the arms of Prussia or France; and here was another reason for our not seeming to begin the war. For the old defensive alliance still subsisted between England and Holland, but by its terms Dutch assistance in case of war was conditional on England's not being the aggressor. Should we begin the war, then our last slender hold upon our old ally would be snapped, and Antwerp and the Texel might become practically naval bases for the French.

[1] Newcastle to Bentinck, Dec. 17, 1754, *Newcastle Papers, Add. MSS.* 32,851.

But this anxiety about the Dutch and Flemish ports, this alarming prospect of a French war without the accustomed support of the Triple Alliance, was by no means the greatest of Newcastle's preoccupations. Two other groupings of the powers intensified the complication. The first of these was the old family solidarity between the Bourbon houses of France and Spain, against which the War of the Spanish Succession had been waged in vain except for the securities we had won in the Mediterranean at Minorca and Gibraltar. But this alliance also was decrepit, and there had recently come to power at Madrid a Minister of Irish extraction, whose policy, supported by an Anglophil Portuguese queen, leaned to a frank understanding with England. This was General Wall; and Sir Benjamin Keene, our able ambassador at Madrid, was sanguine of detaching him from France so long as we avoided creating a *casus fœderis* by beginning the war. Here, therefore, again it was of the utmost importance that we should not appear the aggressors and operate a Franco-Spanish family alliance. For as between ourselves and France, France, both upon the sea and in America, was completely overweighted; but were once the Spanish fleet and the resources of the Spanish Colonies and naval stations placed at her disposal, our advantage would be lost. Thus it will be seen that in that phrase of Newcastle's, "We then begin the war," lay the whole question of England's preserving her preponderance at sea.

Finally there was the uneasy group formed by France and Prussia. It was an alliance for a definite period formed in 1741, under which France agreed to keep in her pay 20,000 German troops, who were to be always at the disposal of Prussia. This treaty was about to expire, but at least outwardly relations between the

two courts continued thoroughly cordial, and Frederick's Ministers in London and Paris received instructions at every point of the American quarrel to support the French case against England. In doing so Frederick assumed a fine air of judicial impartiality, protesting it was a question in which he was entirely disinterested. But the fact was that for Frederick it was a case of *do ut des*. In strained relations with Russia, on the worst terms with his uncle King George of England and Hanover, guiltily suspicious that Maria Theresa was only waiting for her opportunity for revenge, and knowing that both Czarina and Empress detested him personally, he had no friend to turn to but France. But even there he was not at ease. His contempt for Louis XV. and all his court was not to be concealed any better than he could stomach the airs which the ancient monarchy of the Bourbons assumed to the parvenu kingship of the Hohenzollerns. Still, in his political isolation the advantages he had to gain from a continued alliance with France were so great and obvious that there was little chance of his not lending himself to her cause if it were made worth his while.

And here it was that the awkward question of Hanover stared the British Government in the face, and here was their most desperate dilemma. Unless the neutrality, or at least the safety, of Hanover could be secured, it was useless for us to fight France in the American quarrel. Hanover lay practically defenceless to France and her Prussian ally, and no matter what we gained in America, it would be the old tale. It would have to be given up at the peace to secure the retrocession of Hanover. True, Hanover was no part of the British dominions, though it belonged to the British king. Still, honour could never permit it to be lost to him in a British quarrel,

and moreover there lay bound up in it that old paramount question of naval positions in the North Sea. For whoever controlled Hanover would also control Oldenburg and East Friesland, with the whole German seaboard from Holland to Denmark, and the ports of the Elbe, the Weser, and the Ems. And to make this prospect still more disagreeable the two Scandinavian powers, Sweden and Denmark, with all the naval possibilities on which France had long been accustomed to draw, leaned openly to the Franco-Prussian alliance.

To sum up, then, the position was this. Until in some way or other the neutrality of Hanover had been secured, it was impossible for us to go to war. It was equally impossible, until something had been done, to ensure the inviolability of the Netherlands. Nor in any case could we begin a war without generating a Franco-Spanish alliance against us, and losing the advantage of our own alliance with Holland. If, on the other hand, all this difficult ground could be made firm under our feet, our Colonial quarrel with France would be prevented from spreading to the Continent. It would be confined to the high seas and the Colonial seats of war, and both on the high seas and in the Colonies we had a clear working superiority over France. To keep the war out of Europe was therefore in all probability to make it impossible altogether, and to force France to come to terms. So much and no more was clear, or could be clear, to the statesmen either of France or England, and it was on these data, and no others, that King George and Newcastle had to lay down their course of action.

What, then, were they to do? How did the problem present itself strategically? But here let it be prefaced what we mean by the strategical aspect of the case. In modern times we have acquired the habit of regarding

such problems as if there were two entirely different and contradictory states in the relations of nations, the one a state of war and the other a state of peace, or, in other words, as though there were always a point where intercourse or diplomacy ended, and severance or strategy began. Now Clausewitz, with all the experiences of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars to guide him, long ago pointed out that this conception of international relations was false both in theory and practice. At the time of which we are speaking the truth required no demonstration, for the practice of reprisal was not yet obsolete. It still formed a debatable march-land within which the frontier between peace and war existed, but could never be traced. There were innocent forms of reprisal which were clearly distinguishable from war, and were clearly forms of intercourse. Such were the seizure of vessels illegally fishing, or the seizure of vessels carrying contraband or breaking a blockade, and these we still admit as forms of intercourse. But we have lost what in the middle of the eighteenth century was still recognised. Between such innocent forms of reprisal as those mentioned and actual war there were still other forms rising in intensity up to a state of general reprisal which was scarcely if at all distinguishable from full hostility. It was therefore natural for a statesman of the eighteenth century to draw no hard and fast line between diplomacy and strategy. For him every turn of hostilities presented itself diplomatically, and every diplomatic move as an aspect of strategy.

What, then, was the sound strategy for the King and Newcastle? Seeing what the resources of the kingdom were—a powerful fleet and a weak army—how was the fundamental question to be answered? Was our action to be offensive or defensive? Clearly it was a case for

defence. Not mere passive defence, but the true defensive strategy, that is, waiting till the pressure of the conditions should present an opportunity for assuming the offensive with effect. And this is exactly what was done. The despatch of two regiments to America, the order to increase the Colonial forces, the appointment of General Braddock to command the whole, and his sailing with a squadron under Commodore Keppel, were acts of a true strategical defensive. They were acts of expectancy, of standing fast, while on every hand diplomatic machinery was at work to bring the conditions up to offensive temper. Nor was that all. The other essential of a scientific defensive was also present—that is to say, that provision was made for the defensive to pass into the offensive the moment the opening came. The operations which Braddock's instructions authorised were not merely confined to breaking the connection between New Orleans and Montreal which the French had established. Fort Duquesne was of course the main objective, and its capture was to be followed by the reduction of the French posts on the Bull River and the south shore of Lake Erie, while the fire-eating Shirley, Governor of Massachusetts, was to move by way of Oswego, our post on Ontario, against Fort Niagara. This post, which the French had established illegally, as we contended, in the neutral territory controlled the communications between Erie and Ontario, and its capture would at once prevent a counter-attack from Montreal, and lay Canada open to an invasion by the forces of the Southern Colonies down the course of the St. Lawrence. To secure this advantage provision was made at Oswego for the establishment of a naval force upon the Great Lakes. Further than this, a third column was authorised to proceed against Crown Point, the fort which the French had built on Lake Champlain,

and its destruction would expose Canada to a blow at its centre, which would sever Montreal from Quebec and the sea. No one as yet, except Shirley, contemplated the expulsion of the French from Canada, but here was a broad design by which operations could pass into a frank offensive to that end. To complete the scheme, the other disputed area which lay between Canada and Nova Scotia had to be attended to. For here, at the head of the Bay of Fundy, Galissonière had established a post called Fort Beauséjour, which with its dependencies completely commanded the debatable ground. As the whole matter was still *sub judice*, such proceedings were not to be borne, and against Beauséjour, therefore, a fourth column was to proceed from Boston by sea. This was a move essentially naval. For its success would completely isolate the French naval station at Louisbourg while it secured the rear of our own at Halifax.

To characterise such projects as defensive may appear a straining of terms, especially when we think they were to be put in execution before any declaration of war. But the truth is that Colonial operations, by long tradition and numberless precedents, were still regarded as lying within the region of reprisal, or of what we may call hostile intercourse short of war. No statesman of that day would regard such operations as necessarily involving war. Indeed for years past similar action had been going on in America and India without a state of war arising. French colonists had invaded English rights, and the English colonists were to push them back. That was all. It was a mere question of title, as different from war as an affair of outposts from a battle. That Imperial troops were going out to support the colonists made a certain difference, which, as we shall see, the French did not fail to notice, but still the

whole movement was merely to vindicate the position we claimed in America, to defend it against the French claims.

This becomes clearer if we examine the nature of the operations which Braddock was authorised to organise. At first sight they will appear as a complete plan of attack upon Canada, but it must be observed that there was one line of operation left out of the programme, and this was the most important of all—the one which finally succeeded. No provision was made for a direct attack upon Louisbourg to open the way up the St. Lawrence to Quebec. It is obvious that such an operation would have differed entirely from all the others. All those operations that lay within the four corners of Braddock's instructions were directed against points which were actually in dispute between the two countries, and had been actually *sub judice* before the Delimitation Commission. Louisbourg was in a different category. It was a recognised French possession, to which we advanced no claim whatever, and any attack upon it must be a measure of conquest, an open act of war, which would fix us beyond dispute with a fatal act of aggression. Thus we may see how cleverly Newcastle's action was adjusted to the difficult situation. Nothing was to be done to which the French could take exception without condemning their own previous action. "You will try," wrote Newcastle to Albemarle, "to give such a turn to these defensive measures as may make the French Ministers ashamed to complain of them." Thus were we able, without taking a step that could be called first aggression, to commence a widespread strategical defensive, which if successfully conducted would lead to a position whence, when the moment came, an offensive could be instantly developed with every chance of success.

There still remains another point of view from which the situation must be regarded, if we want to come to a right judgment on the British policy in view of war. As between defensive strategy and offensive strategy, we have seen how clearly it was a case for opening with the defensive. Let us test it in relation to that other great classification of wars which goes to the root of all war policy and plans of operation. Besides the classification "defensive and offensive," wars must be classified in relation to their object. We thus get a class of war where the object is "limited" and a class where it is "unlimited," that is, a class of war which aims at securing some definite advantage, such as trading rights, pieces of territory, and the like, and a class which aims at the destruction of the enemy's national power. Now it was obvious that should the war break out in spite of the general efforts to avert it, it would be a war of the first class — a war with a limited object. As between France and England there was no question of destroying one another's power. It was simply a question of certain territory in America. Latterly, it is true, as the war spread and increased in intensity, its character changed. On the Continent it became a war for the destruction and partition of the Prussian kingdom. On the high seas and beyond, it became, in Pitt's hands, a war to determine between France and England which should destroy the other as a Colonial and Imperial power. But that for the present we must forget, and remember only that, at the outset, what loomed ahead was a war with a limited object—to determine the control of a certain piece of Colonial territory, and the lines of certain Colonial frontiers, and that it was absolutely sound strategy to direct policy and adjust means to that end and no other. If Newcastle's measures seem weak, it must be remembered his object

was limited. If Pitt at the end seemed heroic, we must not forget his object had become practically unlimited—it was a question of life and death between two empires, and the continued existence of France as a maritime power.

CHAPTER III

THE TRANSITION FROM DIPLOMACY TO WAR

Though Newcastle was confident of Albemarle's ability to keep the peace, his task could only be of extreme difficulty. The indiscretion which had allowed the intentions of the Government to get into the press had torn the delicate fabric of his negotiations with a rent it was almost impossible to mend, and the ambassador relieved his feelings in no measured terms over the wanton irresponsibility which was then the note of English journalism. "By the nature of our constitution," he wrote in despair, "nothing is kept from the knowledge of the whole world. Even intentions and thoughts are guessed at and made public by those abominable writers of daily papers."[1] Yet he persevered, and managed to maintain cordial relations with the court at Versailles till the day of his sudden and untimely death in December. Till the end of the year, indeed, everything went as smoothly as though nothing more serious than a pleasant international party were in the wind. Parliament had met, but nothing beyond general phrases about protecting the King's oversea possessions had been used either in the Speech from the Throne or the Address. Newcastle went on exchanging dainty presents and even daintier notes with Madame de Pompadour; and Mirepoix, the French ambassador accredited to St. James's, who was on leave, did not take the trouble

[1] Albemarle to Newcastle, Oct. 23, *ibid.*

to disturb his holiday and return to England. The French, however, were now on the alert, and in the first days of the new year 1755 their *chargé d'affaires* by judicious bribery got hold of a copy of Braddock's orders. Braddock was on the eve of sailing, and the information was hurried off to Paris. Then things took a distinct turn for the worse. Orders were sent down to Brest to prepare for a counter-expedition to America. The force scheduled was out of all proportion to that of Braddock's two poor battalions of four hundred each. Six of the finest regular battalions in the French service were to go—the La Reine, Burgundy, Languedoc, Guienne, Artois, and Béarn—three thousand men in all, with a squadron of eighteen sail to carry and escort them. Thus when Mirepoix returned to London the first week in January, he came bristling with bayonets.

The French court was as earnest for peace as Newcastle himself, whose ascendency rested on his unrivalled dexterity in the manipulation of constituencies, and was scarcely robust enough to thrive in the shock of kingdoms. It was hoped at Versailles that the show of force and Mirepoix's conciliatory address would at least bring about an armistice and the remission of the whole affair to arbitration by a new Delimitation Commission. But to rely on the weakness of the British Ministers was useless, and Mirepoix did not long deceive himself. He knew England too well not to hear the growl that was rising in the country, and not to recognise in it that angry tone which he well knew no Minister could ignore. Parliament was to meet again at the end of March, and he knew the Cabinet would not dare to face it without some show of firmness, and he was not mistaken.

About a fortnight after Mirepoix's return to his post,

and as soon as the French decision to reinforce the Canadian garrison was known, Newcastle had summoned the "Inner" or "Secret Committee" of the Council.[1] Of the origin of this important body little is known. All we can tell for certain is that it was the means by which statesmen of that day sought to solve the difficult problem of war direction in a maritime and constitutional country. It first appears as taking the place of the Elizabethan "Council of War" and its Stuart successors at the outbreak of the War of Spanish Succession, and in its eighteenth-century form it seems to owe its war functions to Marlborough, our first great master of combined strategy. Though nominally a committee of the Privy Council, it was an elastic body. Almost any one whose advice or knowledge could be of value at any particular moment might be summoned, and it bore a strong resemblance to the present Council of Defence, except that it had no permanent staff, and was unknown to the constitution. No official record of its proceedings or even of its existence was kept. Apparently it was just the outcome of the necessities of the hour —an expression of the national instinct for mastering in an empirical way an apparently insoluble difficulty of the constitution. On the whole, it cannot be denied the device was successful, at any rate where there existed in high place one such gifted personality as Marlborough or Pitt. Of its methods and constitution more will appear as we proceed. For the present it suffices to note that its decisions, at least on questions of policy, had to be confirmed by the full Cabinet before execution. But this formality in the stress of the war came to be more and more neglected, and at times in

[1] *Newcastle Papers, Add. MSS.* 32,851. The summons is dated Sunday, Jan. 19. The meeting was fixed for the Tuesday following at 8 P.M.

the height of his power Pitt was unable to get Cabinet confirmation even when he wanted it.[1]

On the present occasion the two chief Ministers summoned were Lord Hardwicke, the Lord Chancellor, Newcastle's *éminence grise*, whose great intellect became almost as much at home with strategical problems as it was with those of equity; and Lord Granville, the Lord President, whom, but for his despotic temperament and incorrigible love of drink, his contemporaries believed to be worthy to rank with the greatest statesmen. Horace Walpole could compare him to Richelieu, while Pitt bowed to him as a greater than he "in the upper part of government," and honoured him as the patron and master who made him what he was. The Foreign Office was represented by the two "Principal Secretaries of State," for in those days the office was divided into two departments, one for the north of Europe and one for the south, and the posts were now filled respectively by the Earl of Holderness and Sir Thomas Robinson, neither men of mark. Finally there were the two service representatives, Lord Anson, First Lord of the Admiralty, and Sir John Ligonier, Lieutenant-General of the Ordnance. It was these two men who throughout were the responsible experts to advise the Government, and never perhaps did England start a war with two more competent men at the helm. The Duke of Cumberland was commander-in-chief, but Ligonier, in virtue of his office, was practically chief of the staff. He was a soldier of European renown. A French Huguenot, born in 1680, he had served as a regimental officer through Marlborough's campaigns with the highest distinction. In

[1] For the little that is known on this interesting subject, see Carlyle, "Committees of the Council," *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, 1906, p. 673; the Author's "Queen Anne's Defence Committee," *Monthly Review*, 1904, p. 55; Anson, *Law and Custom of the Constitution;* Morley, *Walpole*, chap. vii.

the late war he had redoubled his reputation. For his conduct at Dettingen he won the rare distinction of being knighted by the King on the field under the royal banner. As an administrator in peace he was as immaculate as a leader in war. His regiment, the 7th Dragoon Guards, which still would cling to its old name, "Ligonier's," became a pattern to Europe. During four years' campaigning it never lost a man by desertion, never had man or officer tried by a general court-martial, nor a man or horse taken by the enemy; it lost only six men by sickness, and no less than thirty-seven of its non-commissioned officers and men were promoted to commissioned rank for distinguished conduct. His last exploit in the late war had been, as general of horse, to save the Duke of Cumberland's army at the battle of Val by a brilliant charge of four regiments which he led in person. His horse shot under him, he was taken prisoner, and Marshal Saxe presented him to the French king as "a man who by one glorious action has disconcerted all my projects." Had equal play been given to his strategical powers, it is probable that many other French projects would have been disconcerted. The long series of his despatches to the War Office display a real grasp, not only of the ordinary combinations of a campaign, but of the major strategy by which wars are planned. By universal consent he was regarded, whether in the field or in council, as one of the most brilliant and accomplished soldiers that ever served the British Crown.

Nor was Anson an unworthy colleague. If power of organisation is shown at its highest by working impossibilities with impossible material, Anson had revealed it in that famous voyage into the South Sea, which was the foundation of his fame. It won him a seat at the

Board of Admiralty, and indeed more, for when Lord Sandwich became First Lord in 1748 Anson was practically allowed to exercise the power of a commander-in-chief. On the whole the dictatorship worked admirably. His abilities were by no means confined to administration. During his command of the Channel Fleet, which ended in his well-planned annihilation of De la Jonquière's squadron off Finisterre in 1747, he had initiated important reforms in tactics. In the early years of the war the line had reached its depth of rigid formalism, and all progress seemed to be arrested till Anson could make his genius felt. Amongst other improvements he introduced the line of bearing, a hitherto unknown formation, upon which the nicer manipulations of the line have been based ever since, and started officially the famous system of "Additional Fighting Instructions," which rendered it possible for English tactics to shake themselves free from the pedantry which they had exhibited under Mathews in the Mediterranean. At the Admiralty his reforms were as sweeping and active. To his administration belong the articles of war which lasted in force till 1865, and the marines as they now exist. Nor was it only in personnel that his hand was seen. Dockyard administration, naval architecture, ordnance, stores, all were dealt with and improved, and indeed the whole system of supply was placed on a new and more satisfactory basis. As a tactician, then, and as an administrator, he is entitled to rank as a father of the British Navy. In the third qualification which goes to make the great naval officer his record is less clear. In strategy we can only judge him by results. So inflexible was his taciturnity that scarcely anything has come down from his pen to reveal his strategical ideas. Yet as we follow the combinations for which he

was responsible, and the sagacious reform he introduced into the composition of the fleet, it becomes evident that he at least did much to lift the subject out of the confused tradition of the service which in those days, and long after, had to do duty for strategical science.

Such were the men to whom the Minister looked for guidance at that fateful meeting in January 1755. What passed we do not know. No notes of the proceedings of this committee are known to exist, but it is clear the expert advice was that precautions must be taken to ensure that if the French persisted in their intention of sending reinforcements to America, those reinforcements must never reach their destination. From the point of view of pure strategy, so much was plain sailing, and Anson forthwith commenced to place the fleet on a war footing. The first step in those days was to prepare what were called the "guardships" for active service by mounting their lower deck guns and completing their nucleus crews. As Parliament during the last session had voted 13,000 seamen instead of the usual peace footing of 8000, this was quickly done, and an emergency force quite in the modern style was on foot to cover the larger process of mobilisation.

For the civilian Ministers the course was not quite so clear. There existed, as we know, political conditions which blurred the true strategical outlines. From the point of view of pure strategy, to intercept the French force, if it sailed, was the right step in the line of active defence which had been taken up, but it was by no means so clear that diplomacy could accept the strategical view. Holland, Austria, and Spain might call such a move offensive, and if they did, and pushed their view to its logical conclusion, England, instead of strengthening her position, would turn the balance of sea power against

herself. The situation was one of extreme difficulty, well worth study as a case of the deflecting power of political considerations upon strategy, and not to be lightly dismissed by ridiculing the vacillation and perplexity of Newcastle. Worried the nervous old Minister certainly was, but not through inability to grasp the situation. One of his first steps was to write to Keene, our ambassador at Madrid, telling him that on no account would he grant his request for leave, "when," as he said, "France and we are arming against each other, and when nobody can say but we may be on the brink of war, though I own it is my opinion we shall avoid it."[1]

Here again, wise after the event, we may laugh at the shallow politician for his optimism, but it would be unjust. He had reasons for his belief that were sound enough, nor did they cause him to turn from the line he had taken up. The memorandum he carried with him the next time he saw the King noted that his Majesty's approval was to be sought for frankly informing Spain of the modest extent of the British preparations, and, seeing that the French persisted in their resolution, to consult as to whether ships should be sent to America at once, and if so, how they were to act in regard to the French squadron and troops when they arrived. Ships were not sent at once. Whose idea it was that they should be, or who held them back, we cannot tell. It must suffice to note that such a suspension, though strategically unsound, was sound diplomatically. So far as any principle of naval strategy was or is established, the proper course, if we really meant business, was to intercept the French at the point of departure; but, on the other hand, if the act were

[1] Newcastle to Keene, Jan. 27 (that is, five days after the Secret Committee met), *Add. MSS.* 32,851.

delayed till they were in Colonial waters, it would have more obviously an aspect of defence and prevention. On the whole, then, the balance of the opposing lines of thought was in favour of not stirring until the French actually began their move.

Then as for Newcastle's reasons for believing that war would be averted, they were of great weight. In the first place Austria was showing signs of coming round, and there was a brighter prospect of renewing the old Triple Alliance with her and Holland and the restoration of the Barrier. Thus the neutrality, at least of the Netherlands, would be secured. Besides this, a most brilliant and promising device had been hit on for securing the inviolability of Hanover. To the average Englishman it is now scarcely credible that there still exists on the Continent an uneasy tradition that British diplomacy, when hard pressed, is capable of depths of unscrupulous astuteness such as no other nation really believes itself able to reach. We may take a different view, enjoying as we do the contemplation of our diplomatic failures rather than exulting over our successes, because nothing keeps up a nation's self-esteem or its sense of rectitude and chivalry so comfortably as its diplomatic failures. Still, we have in our time dealt strokes which go far to justify the Continental view of our invincible cunning; and the device which the King and Newcastle had hit on to secure the safety of Hanover was one of them.

Long ago, in the middle of the sixteenth century, when England, seeking to expand her trade towards Asia by way of the north-east, had found the North Sea and Baltic barred by the resistance of the German Hanseatic League, she had "discovered" Russia, and by helping her to an outlet in the Baltic had raised up a formidable

ally against the obstructing powers. Now that another German power had risen up in place of the Hansa and was standing in the way of Colonial expansion, it was again to Russia she turned. For it must be remembered it was the jeopardy of Hanover that chiefly fettered our action in America, and it was Prussia that put Hanover in jeopardy. Measures were already on foot to secure subsidised troops from Hesse and other minor German States, whose sovereigns still carried on a condottiere business, in order to form an army of observation towards France; but unless its rear were secured against the restless ambition of Frederick the Great, Hanover could not be defended. It was thus the old idea was revived. George II. had his eye on Russia, and after some pourparlers negotiations had been opened in form, which had for their object this simple plan, that if Prussia moved against Hanover she would find Russia on her back.

Clearly, then, if this ingenious project succeeded—and Russia was in so bad a humour with Prussia there was little doubt it would succeed—and if Austria really came round and Spain declared neutrality, it was impossible for France to seek guarantees in Europe against conquests we might make in America. Isolated on the Continent, she would be forced to confine the war to the high seas and the Colonies, where England held all the cards. Such a war could only end in one way, and it was therefore not unreasonable to believe that sooner than embark on so hopeless a struggle, France would come peacefully to terms. So far, then, all was in the British favour. It was in vain that the French sought a way out by urging their suggestion of an armistice. The King was convinced it was only a device to secure delay, because, as he said, we were everywhere ahead of them, and he flatly refused to consider anything but a definitive treaty.

Neither side would give way; each continued its preparations, and on March 10th Mirepoix had made up his mind that an accommodation was hopeless. As yet, so he informed his Government, the English had formed no plan of operations; but they meant mischief, and he advised that Louisbourg should be warned to be on its guard. Next day came the King's proclamation offering a bounty for service in the navy. So high was the public spirit that most of the big seaports responded by increasing the bounty at their own cost, and by the 14th thirty-five of the line and a number of cruisers were put in commission and began to fill up fast. Ten days later Parliament met and the King's speech laid the whole case before them. His Majesty had "found it necessary to augment his force by sea and land and to take such other measures as might best tend to preserve the general peace of Europe and to secure the just rights and possessions of his crown in America, as well as to repel any attempts whatsoever that might be formed against him and his kingdoms, and he trusted to his faithful Commons to make the proper augmentation." His trust was not misplaced; they promptly voted him a million on account. Warlike preparations went on with renewed vigour, and side by side with them the negotiations for a peaceful settlement.

Nobody believed in them, but neither party was in a hurry to begin. France continued to insist on an armistice till England bluntly rejected the idea and declared for a definitive treaty. Then France sent something like an ultimatum in which she gaily claimed the whole of the disputed territory, both in Nova Scotia and the Ohio Valley. To such a note there could be but one answer, and before April was out Mirepoix was warning his Government that war was practically decided

on. The King had made up his mind to sail for Hanover on April 28th, bent on the completion of the treaties with Russia and the condottiere princes for the protection of Hanover. In his absence there would be a Regency. Its President would be the King's soldier son, the Duke of Cumberland, whose old military grudges against France would quench the last spark of peace. The only hope, as the ambassador said, was the English wish to avoid being deemed the aggressors, and their desire to gain time till their Continental combinations were complete. But he warned his master the fleet that was to stop the movement from Brest had already put to sea from Portsmouth, and had taken up an interior position at Plymouth watching for the first sign of the French coming out, though, for the reasons above given, he thought the admiral probably had no instructions to begin hostilities at sea.

So far had the Ministers advanced towards war. In spite of their reputation for weakness and vacillation, and in spite of the extreme difficulties of the situation, they had not flinched, and the process of thought by which they had reached the position we know step by step—indeed it is seldom we can trace so exactly the way in which the opening moves of a great war were planned. Since the last meeting of the "Inner Committee" our intelligencer in Brittany had been continually reporting the activity at Brest and Rochefort. On February 14th he sent off a complete list of the Brest squadron, fifteen of the line, three fifty-gun ships, and three frigates. Eight more of the line were well advanced to support them, and there were six more at Rochefort, making thirty-two battleships in all. He further reported that the first squadron would sail in April.[1] On March 18th, that is, immediately after

[1] *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters (Intelligence)*, 3941.

the final rejection of the French proposal for an armistice when Mirepoix believed war was decided on, the Inner Committee met again. Besides Newcastle, there were present Lord Hardwicke; Lord Granville, whom Mirepoix regarded as the real stiffening influence; Anson, and the two secretaries. The memorandum of the business to be laid before them was thus jotted down to Newcastle:—

"Invasion here, Hanover, Flanders.
The French will bring the war into Europe.
The orders to be given to our fleet.
To get to sea as soon as possible.
Qy. Whether to intercept ships and land forces going to North America?
To send a squadron to block up Brest.
Qy. Order to General Braddock to attack Montreal and Quebec.
Qy. Order to Shirley and Lawrence about Nova Scotia."

The document is not difficult to interpret. The very strength of the British position in America was the timid Minister's anxiety. He foresaw it would tend to force the French to operate in Europe either by direct invasion or by eccentric movements in Flanders or Hanover. He now certainly regarded war as inevitable, and what he wanted to decide was how far we should go towards taking the offensive both at sea and in America. The committee came to a perfectly clear decision, which Newcastle thus records: "Their Lordships are of opinion that a strong squadron should be ordered to Torbay: that the Admiral commanding, upon intelligence of any number of ships being sailed for North America, shall detach a sufficient force from the squadron directly to Nova Scotia with orders to fall upon and endeavour to prevent the French ships from going into or landing any forces on the con-

tinent of North America; or to have a proper number of ships sent in any event to Nova Scotia to prevent the French landing any troops in North America, and to destroy their ships there. The determination of which alternative must depend upon the advices received in the meantime of the designs of the French fleet." As to Braddock, it was agreed it would be better not to attempt Montreal or Quebec at present, because it would interfere with the design in hand, and a miscarriage would be dangerous and contrary to the British declaration.[1] The strategical principle involved in this decision is clear. While avoiding overstepping the line into the offensive, either by invading Canada or blockading Brest, the policy of pushing the active defensive to its furthest limits was to be adhered to. To this end the active force was to take up a position at Torbay, afterwards, as we have seen, changed to Plymouth, which would give it interior lines and enable it in any event to appear at the decisive point before the French.

Six days later the committee met again, and in consequence of intelligence which left no doubt of the French intentions resolved to act on the second alternative. "Their lordships were of opinion," so the minute runs, "that a squadron not exceeding seven of the line should be sent as soon as ready to cruise off Louisbourg, with instructions to fall upon any French ships of war that shall be attempting to land troops in Nova Scotia or to go to Cape Breton or through the St. Lawrence to Quebec." A fortnight later this resolution was confirmed in full Cabinet, "owing to the state of the negotiations about America and the preparations in Brest, Rochefort, and Rochelle.[2]

[1] *Newcastle Papers* (*Cabinet Memoranda*), *Add. MSS.* 32,996.
[2] *Ibid.*, April 10.

Orders were issued accordingly, and the officer appointed to command the squadron was Vice-Admiral the Hon. Edward Boscawen. Though the choice was probably due mainly to political and family connections, there was really no reputation of the last war which stood higher than his and was available for the post. Anson was wanted at the Admiralty, Hawke was to command in the Channel, and Cornewall, on whom the hopes of the service had been set, and who would seem to have combined in his inspiring personality the qualities of both Anson and Hawke, lived only in his colossal monument in the Abbey. At Cartagena, under Vernon, Boscawen had certainly done well, but it was purely shore work storming a battery. He had also done Anson such good service in his action with De la Jonquière that, junior as he was, the next flag promotion had been stretched to include him. In 1751 he was given a seat at the Board of Admiralty, and there he thenceforth remained, one of the faithful who helped to make Anson the autocrat he was. There were also several Cornish boroughs up his sleeve by his elder brother Lord Falmouth's interest, and lately he had been doing Newcastle yeoman service as Parliamentary whip.[1] Accordingly, although in his one big chance when in the last years of the late war he was made commander-in-chief both on sea and land in the East Indies he had failed completely against Dupleix, his appointment was a foregone conclusion. The Indian failure had scarcely been his fault, and his reputation and popularity with the seamen were unscathed.

Scarcely had his appointment been made out when Mirepoix presented the extraordinary ultimatum which has been already noticed, claiming the whole of the

[1] See *Newcastle Papers, Add. MSS.* 32,853 *passim.*

disputed territory for France. Again the Inner Committee met, and promptly added three of the line and "a frigate of 50 guns" to his force, and ordered him to proceed immediately to North America. At the same time it was resolved to reject the ultimatum, and on April 21st the Cabinet confirmed both resolutions.[1]

Such then was the position when Mirepoix informed his Government that Boscawen had no instructions to commence hostilities; but even as Mirepoix wrote his despatch, Boscawen had received his sailing orders, and on April 27th he was away. His instructions were, after communicating with the frigates that were watching Brest, to proceed direct to Halifax, take Keppel and the North American squadron under his flag, and place himself in communication with General Braddock. He was then to take up his station off Louisbourg in order to carry out the resolutions on which the Cabinet had decided. Finally his orders ran: "If you fall in with any French ships of war or other vessels having on board troops or warlike stores you will do your best to take possession of them. In case resistance should be made, you will employ the means at your disposal to capture and destroy them." In view of what occurred, the wording of this order must be borne in mind.

It is usually stated—and the point is important—that these orders were communicated to the French Government; but Mirepoix's correspondence shows that this was not so. On May 1st he wrote to Rouillé, the French Foreign Minister, that he had tried to get the information out of Robinson, the British Foreign Secretary concerned, but had failed. Four days later he assured his chief that he had learned on good authority that Bos-

[1] *Newcastle Papers* (*Cabinet Memoranda*), April 17, 21, and 22, *Add. MSS.* 32,996.

cawen had received orders at Plymouth to attack the French squadron wherever he found it. But by the 10th he was completely reassured. "After leaving the Council," he wrote on that day, "my lord Grenville (*sic*) and the Chevalier Robinson came to dine with me. . . . These two Ministers have assured me positively that the information I had of the offensive orders given to Admiral Boscawen was absolutely false; and so far as I can judge from what they let out the Admiral has orders to act offensively only in case of hostilities being opened by us in the Acadian peninsula (Nova Scotia), or in their other established colonies."[1] In face of this letter there is really no more to be said. The principle of securing or improving your strategical position by a sudden and secret blow before declaration of war is, and was then, well known. Almost every maritime war which we had waged had begun in this way. If precedent can sanctify an international usage, this one was beyond question admissible. Our Ministers had committed themselves to the time-honoured principle, and whatever their irresolution and incapacity, they at least must not be saddled with this unspeakable piece of folly, that having determined to open the war without declaration by a secret blow, they informed the enemy of their intention. It is not a pretty picture that Mirepoix gives us of Granville and Robinson lying their best to him at his own table, but at least they were playing the great game of war, and playing it correctly.

To the French admiral Mirepoix's perplexity made no difference. On May 3rd, before any of this contradictory information could reach Brest, the expedition had put to sea. For a month past constant reports had been coming in that it had done so, but our cruiser squadron that was

[1] Waddington, vol. i. p. 97.

watching the port gave no sign. Between these cruisers and our intelligencers the state of things at Brest was pretty well known in Whitehall. It was known there were two squadrons in the harbour, both of which had come out into the road some time before. One was under Dubois de la Motte, destined to convey the troops to America, and the other the regular Brest squadron under Macnamara, which was to cover the sailing of the expedition. All that was doubtful was the comparative strength of the two squadrons; how many of De la Motte's squadron were fully armed, and how many armed only *en flûte* as transports; and finally, whether Macnamara had orders to escort the expedition the whole way, or only past the Soundings. The latter point was the most serious, and Newcastle was for getting four more of the line ready to reinforce Boscawen in case of need, but Anson was away taking the King across the North Sea on his great diplomatic mission, and nothing apparently was done. It was a question the frigates could not settle, but what was in their power they did. Boscawen had been in touch with them on April 30th, and had assured himself from their report that he was well ahead of his adversary.[1] And when at last the French stole out with no lights burning, they were promptly seen by our cruisers. After shadowing them till the particulars of the squadron were accurately ascertained to be nineteen of the line and six frigates, Captain Taylor of the *Seaford* ran into Penzance and hurried off his news to London by road. It arrived by May 8th. The Cabinet was sitting to approve an answer to Mirepoix's last move. Captain Taylor's despatch was read, and Anson, who by this time had returned, was authorised

[1] Boscawen to Cleveland (Secretary to the Admiralty), April 30, from lat. 48·06, long. 3·07, *Newcastle Papers, Add. MSS.* 32,854, f. 376.

a rest down at Claremont, while the King in Hanover and Holderness at The Hague were slaving at the treaties, and Anson at the Admiralty was hard at work over Hawke's fleet. For about ten days all was quiet. Then the cruisers that had been shadowing Macnamara began to come in with news that after all he had returned to Brest. Of Holburne there was no news at all, but no one seemed much disturbed. He had apparently gone on, and De la Motte's fate seemed sealed. So well had Anson worked that he was able to assure Newcastle that in ten days he would have twenty-four of the line ready for Hawke, and Newcastle thought they should put to sea to cruise for a month in order to "exercise and show themselves."

So much was quite simple, but again there was a serious difficulty. Hawke could not be sent to sea without instructions of some kind as to how he was to treat French ships. What were these instructions to be? Would it be safe to allow him on this side of the Atlantic to go as far as Boscawen was authorised to go on the other? If not, how far was he to go, or was he to do nothing? It was a difficult matter to decide, for what might easily pass for reprisal or fair acts of defence in Colonial waters would take quite a different colour off the French coasts. Still, as we had embarked on a course of preparatory action, it was only wise to carry it as far as possible; and it so happened a splendid opportunity for further securing the position at sea offered itself. It was the season for the home-coming of the French East and West India fleets, and nothing was easier than to seize them. Such a measure, aimed mainly at crippling the enemy's finance at the critical moment of mobilisation, had been a favourite practice of the English ever since Drake made his first

dash at the Spanish Plate fleet in 1585. It had become the regular thing during our Dutch wars, and William the Third had attempted it in 1701 on the eve of the War of Spanish Succession. In the case of France it would have the further advantage of materially reducing her already insufficient supply of good seamen. Newcastle fully appreciated the difficulty of the problem, and characteristically ever ready to let any one take the responsibility of solving it, he wrote as usual to his confidant and mentor, Lord Hardwicke, and begged him to consider the matter before the next council, pointing out the splendid chance that offered, and, at the same time, the danger it involved of turning Spain against us. The King, he believed, would like aggression. He himself was open to conviction, and begged Hardwicke to consult Anson.

This again was his usual practice. Anson had married Hardwicke's eldest daughter, and the splendid Chancellor and the silent sailor had grown to be on terms of the warmest affection. "This domestic connection," Hardwicke noted in one of the admiral's rare and treasured letters, "was the greatest private happiness I have yet known."[1] For other reasons also the high-minded admiral had much more regard for his father-in-law than for his political chief. It may be said that Newcastle's view of the constitution was that every department of State existed primarily to provide him with a majority in the House of Commons. Anson set his face doggedly against the navy being used in this way, and was quite Puritanical about political promotions. Probably he did not conceal his knowledge that Hardwicke's was the dominating brain of the

[1] Anson to Hardwicke, May 13, 1758, *Hardwicke Papers, Add. MSS.* 35,359.

administration, and Newcastle was obviously not a little afraid of his redoubtable First Lord. He preferred always to get Hardwicke between them. Hardwicke saw Anson at once, and reported that he found him quite reasonable about the fleet getting to sea. Apparently Newcastle never expected to find Anson reasonable; their ideas of what was reasonable were seldom alike. Anson agreed that a cruise would be good for both fleet and crews, and thought innocent orders not entailing mischief might be devised. The idea was that such orders might be based on an authorisation to attack any French *squadron* that was met with, but not single ships. Anson explained to Hardwicke that this would be innocent enough, since, as he said, "the French trade will not come home in fleets, nor will any French squadron risk putting to sea while our fleet is out." Such is the first hint of the ingenious device by which the Government sought to throw the responsibility for action on Hawke's shoulders, and it appears to come from Anson. We may, however, suspect the unrivalled ingenuity of the greatest lawyer of his age. Hardwicke's own opinion—and this, as a matter of course, he knew would become Newcastle's—was that it would be bad if the fleet went out and did nothing, and still worse if, after all the expense the country had been put to, it should lie idle at Spithead. But, as Anson said, there was no need for it to sail for a fortnight, and meanwhile there was time to get the King's orders. This suggestion was exactly to Newcastle's mind. It enabled him to defer a decision, and it was adopted.

No sooner, however, had the weak-kneed resolution been taken than news came in that seriously forced the pace. The Brest squadron had been ordered to sea again. What its object was could not be fathomed.

Rumour said its destination was Lisbon and Cadiz, and its mission to cover the homecoming of the French East and West India trade; but it was, of course, possible that it was an attempt to force the hand of Spain. As the perplexity deepened, so the need for a decision became more pressing. In a few days the King's answer arrived, but it brought no relief. Not to be drawn into taking the responsibility off the shoulders of the English Government, he advised that Hawke should put to sea for training, but for the present without instructions to fall on the French fleet or intercept their trade. But this would never do, and the Inner Committee met again. To let a man like Hawke loose without instructions could only end one way. Anson pointed out that if the two fleets got into contact a collision was certain, and all the harm would ensue without the good. It was therefore decided to keep Hawke in port till they could give him proper instructions. Before breaking up they seem to have settled the general lines on which he was to act, for next day Newcastle was writing to Hardwicke that he was uneasy about last night's orders, which Anson said amounted to general hostilities. It would be better, he thought, to soften them a little till they had news how things were going in America.

This was the main consideration. June had come to an end and not a word had been heard from Braddock or Boscawen. Nor was it till a fortnight later that they knew how miserably their naval stroke had failed. For some reason that is not clear Boscawen had made his landfall at Cape St. Francis on the east coast of Newfoundland to the north of St. John's, and after two or three days' delay had moved down to take up his station off Cape Race, at the south-eastern extremity. Two ships had been sent on ahead, and one of these, the *Dunkirk*, was

commanded by Richard Howe, then, though only thirty years old, a post-captain of nine years' standing. By the time Boscawen arrived Howe was able to inform him that a French ship full of soldiers had been seen by an English "banker" with whom he had spoken. Clearly the French were already about, and sure enough next morning they sighted four large vessels, and the whole squadron gave chase. By midday, however, a thick fog settled down, and when it cleared next morning the French were nowhere to be seen. The following day three of them were sighted again to windward. Boscawen hoisted French colours and they bore down to him, but the wind was so light that it was dark before they joined. All night Boscawen held the wind, and on the morning of June 10th was rewarded by seeing the Frenchmen six or seven miles away on the lee bow. They began making signals, but as Boscawen could not answer them they took to their heels. Howe, who was usually in the right place, was nearest them, and led the chase. What happened is not quite certain, but so far as the English and French accounts are to be reconciled it was this: Howe soon ranged alongside the rearmost French ship and, apparently in accordance with Boscawen's general instructions, called on her captain to shorten sail and speak with the admiral. The Frenchman, of course, did not comply, but hailed Howe two or three times to know if they were at peace or war. The French say Howe at last answered, "Peace! Peace!" The French captain from his stern walk then asked who the British admiral was, and when he heard it was Boscawen said, "He is an old friend of mine." It was true enough, for the French captain was M. Hocquart, whom Boscawen had twice had the honour of taking prisoner in the previous war. Howe then asked him who he was. But before the answer came it would

seem that Howe was told the flagship was flying the signal to engage, and thereupon he gave the order to fire. "The captain refusing to shorten sail," is the laconic account of the *Dunkirk's* log, "engaged with (the signal having been made by the vice-admiral) and brought the ship to." Boscawen in his despatch tells the story almost as simply. "About noon," he says, "Captain Howe in the *Dunkirk* came alongside of the sternmost, when observing the French ship did not shorten sail, I made the signal to engage, which was directly obeyed by Captain Howe, and returned by the French ship, but in a very few minutes she was brought by the lee. And upon the *Torbay's* [Boscawen's flagship] coming up (which was the next ship) and firing one gun only she struck." According to the *Torbay's* journal it was all over in fourteen minutes. She proved to be the *Alcide* of 64 guns and 480 men. As to the other two vessels, one, the *Lys*—another 64, but armed *en flûte* only—was captured in the afternoon after a two hours' stern chase, with four companies of the La Reine Regiment, and four of Languedoc. But the third got away as the fog settled down again. She was the *Dauphin Royal*, and, as Boscawen regretfully notes, "the best sailer in France."[1]

Such was that famous encounter, and the strange thing is that there is nothing to show that Boscawen was not quite satisfied with his performance. By commencing hostilities at sea he had done all the mischief he could do to the English position, while to the French he had done scarcely any at all. But he seems to have been in no way disturbed. He continued his cruise com-

[1] For Boscawen's despatch, see *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters*, 481; and for his Journal, *Admirals' Journals*, 3. For other authorities see Parkman, *Montcalm and Wolfe*; Waddington, *Renversement des Alliances*; Lacour-Gayet, *Marine Militaire sous Louis XV*.

placently, making his way slowly westward towards Louisbourg. From his prisoners he learnt that Macnamara had returned after coming out two hundred leagues, and in a day or two he was joined by the *Gibraltar* frigate, from which he heard that Holburne was following him, and that he himself was to return at once to England, leaving Holburne with a sufficient force to deal with what the French had on the station. On the 20th two of Holburne's squadron appeared, and next day the whole fleet was assembled before Louisbourg. Six vessels could be seen inside, one of which was the *Dauphin Royal*. "By this," wrote Boscawen, still undisturbed, "I conclude Monsieur Bois de la Motte is gone into the Gulf of St. Lawrence with the *Entreprenant* [De la Motte's flagship] and the rest of the ships armed *en flûte*."

It was only too true. How he had managed it is not so clear. It is usually taken that he had slipped through Boscawen's fingers in the fogs, and that the ships which the English fleet fell in with were merely some that had been scattered from the main body in a storm. There was, however, a belief in the British service that De la Motte owed his escape to a very clever and daring stroke of strategy. Besides the ordinary entrance into the Gulf of St. Lawrence by the Cabot Strait past Louisbourg, there was another north-about between Newfoundland and Labrador, by way of the Belleisle Strait. It was a passage well known to whalers, but never used by ships of the line. But it was believed by some that De la Motte had boldly made up his mind to use it to outwit Boscawen, and that, having divided his command into two squadrons, he sent one under Périer de Salvert to Louisbourg by the ordinary way, with the two battalions destined for that garrison, and

himself led the others to Quebec through the Strait of Belleisle.[1]

From Louisbourg Boscawen sent home his despatches, assuring the Government he would return as soon as he could. But that was not so easy. His ships had been a good deal knocked about by bad weather, and a malignant fever, apparently typhoid, had broken out. So bad did it get that he had to take the worst ships into Halifax, leaving Holburne to keep up the blockade of Louisbourg, while he himself set to work to stamp out the epidemic.[2]

At home the news was received with mixed feelings. So soon as the *Gazette* announced that Boscawen had captured three French vessels, the country as a whole went wild with delight. For the people generally it meant that the demoralising wrangle had come to blows at last. England had asserted herself on the high seas in defence of her rights, and for the moment it was on that that the public desire was set. For a while the Ministers were almost popular, but they themselves knew only too well what a blunder had been made. Nothing could justify the step they had taken but complete success; and it had failed. They had screwed up their courage to give Boscawen his drastic orders on the supposition that if he attacked at all practically the whole French fleet would be captured, and nearly the

[1] Charnock, *Biographia Navalis*, v. p. 326, *sub voce* "Boscawen." I can, however, find no confirmation of this in any French authority. Waddington merely says, "*Le Chef d'Escadre Périer de Salverte avait pu entrer à Louisbourg et y debarquer les deux bataillons qui devaient renforcer la garnison.*" Charnock's statement is, however, corroborated by intelligence received from France by our Foreign Office shortly after De la Motte's return. See Report of Inquiry into the Conduct of the War, 1757 (*Parl. Debates*, iii. 328).

[2] See Boscawen's despatches of July 4 and July 12 (received Aug. 26), *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters*, 481.

whole had escaped. On July 14th Hardwicke wrote to Newcastle: "I have just received from Lord Anson the private letter which Admiral Boscawen addressed him under date June 21st. We have done too much or too little. The disappointment this news causes troubles me greatly." To Anson he replied, "It gives me much concern that so little has been done, since anything has been done at all. *Voilà* the war begun!" "Poor Admiral Boscawen," wrote Newcastle in his letter to Hanover, "has had ill luck. He has only taken two ships. We meet this evening."[1]

It was well they should. Everything had gone wrong; their whole preparatory strategy had been turned against them. It was now known that the Brest squadron since its return had gone south, and the outlook towards Spain was more uncertain than ever. In Hanover, except for an agreement for 8000 Hessians, the King had made little or no progress with his treaties, and Austria was in the worst possible temper over the Barrier question. At such a juncture Boscawen could not have done worse. War was obviously inevitable, and he had struck the first blow in such a way as to entail for his country the utmost amount of harm with the least possible good. To do the Ministers justice, they did not blame him. He had obeyed his orders literally. It was not his fault that they had not provided for the case of his being in a position to attack the French without the certainty of dealing them a blow that was worth the diplomatic consequences it would entail. The incident is a striking example of two vital considerations in making war: one is the importance of admirals fully understanding the political significance of their orders, and the other the im-

[1] *Newcastle Papers*, July 14 and 15, *Add. MSS.* 32,857; *Anson Corr.*, vol. i., *ibid.*, 15,955.

portance at headquarters of familiarity with the elementary principles of strategy. Had Boscawen had clearly in his mind what his action meant, he would scarcely have struck at a couple of ships without first making sure it was possible to attain the object of his mission with the rest. Had Anson had in his mind the formula that blows before war must be "all or not at all," it is scarcely possible Boscawen's orders would have been drafted so carelessly as to permit of his making the mistake he did. Newcastle saw it well enough now. "I think," he quietly remarked in his despatch to Hanover, "Hawke should act for a big object only, but not take single ships."

Full of this strategical discovery, the Inner Committee met. Clearly Hawke must do something, now and at once. The last word from the King was that he refused to decide anything about Hawke's orders till he had consulted his English Ministers, but the Lords Justices (that is, the Council of Regency, who represented him in his absence) were to have discretionary powers to take action if they thought the circumstances demanded it. There was therefore no shirking the responsibility any longer.

Of what took place at the meeting we have a curious picture drawn, on Fox's authority, by that undefeated turncoat Bubb Dodington, whose venom and shiftiness were soon to be rewarded with a second tenure of the Treasurership of the Navy. "Till they had digested something positive," he writes in his acrimonious diary, "they agreed to send an order to Sir Edward Hawke that he should sail with about sixteen ships of the line to Torbay and there expect further directions; that these further directions were to be drawn by Lord Anson and Sir Thomas Robinson; that the Duke of

Cumberland had said if they had any prospect of a peace he had nothing to say; but if they were convinced it must be war, he had no notion of not making the most of the strength and opportunity we had in our hands." This was the usual sound sense that came from Cumberland; and Newcastle tells us that the Duke's reason for recommending immediate action was that although once he had been the strongest for first seeking to secure the neutrality of Hanover by the "Continental plan" at which his father was working, he now saw it was hopeless.[1] As for Newcastle, he still tried to find a place on the fence. "Afterwards," Fox proceeded, "in a window with the Dukes of Marlborough and Newcastle, the latter said that what his Royal Highness had declared was full of very good sense, though he was not entirely of the same opinion; that Lord Granville was absolutely against meddling with trade—he called it 'vexing your neighbours for a little muck'—but that the Duke of Newcastle was by no means of that opinion, but thought some middle way might be found. He was asked, What way? He answered that to be sure Hawke must go out, but that he might be ordered not to attack the enemy unless he thought it worth while. He was answered that Hawke was too wise to do anything at all which others when done were to pronounce he ought to be hanged for. The Duke replied, What if he had orders not to fall upon them unless they were more in number than ten? He was answered that the Brest squadron now at Lisbon is but nine. The Duke said he meant *that* of merchantmen only, for to be sure he must attack any squadron of ships of war. He was asked, What was a squadron? He said, Three ships or more." "This absurdity," Dodington concludes, "is inconceivable.

[1] Newcastle to Holderness, April 18, *Add. MSS.* 32,857.

What orders they will give Hawke to-morrow I shall not go out of my way to inquire." Nor can we blame his impatience.

Newcastle, having made his strategical discovery, was trying to apply it when the time was gone by. Having broken the peace, there was nothing between making amends to France by disavowing Boscawen or making war to the utmost of our resources. Still it remains an instructive picture of the way governments limp and stumble to vital decisions when their path is encumbered by a tangle of political and strategical considerations. Nor would we miss the scene were it only for the one note of high political wisdom which goes to confirm the great opinion which Lord Granville's contemporaries had of his powers as a statesman. How many are there even to-day, in whose hands the guidance of empires lie, who can appreciate at its true worth that pithy phrase of his, "vexing your neighbours for a little muck"? Is it the last word on commerce destroying? We cannot yet tell. All that can be said is that the most advanced opinion seems slowly to be working to Granville's conclusion. Even then it was adopted, and on July 22nd Newcastle sent word to Holderness that Hawke's orders were confined to his taking ships of the line. "We don't want him," he wrote, "taking every little frigate or merchantman he meets. Ships of the line," he added, "will probably keep out of his way." So the shifty Minister felt he could enjoy the popularity of a vigorous order without anything serious coming of it. His attitude was all the more extraordinary, because that very day Mirepoix was leaving London. The moment Boscawen's attack was known in Paris he had been recalled, and diplomatic relations were formally broken off. Before the week was out

Hawke was at sea with sixteen of the line. True, his orders were only to capture French ships of the line, and bring them in to be taken care of, as securities for the redress of the "encroachments" which we had suffered in the Ohio Valley, but he also had authority to prevent a junction between the French Atlantic and Mediterranean squadrons, and to bar the return of Du Bois de la Motte to Brest. It was war all but in name.[1]

[1] Burrow's *Life of Hawke*, quoting from the original "Secret Instructions" preserved in the family.

CHAPTER IV

MOVEMENTS BEFORE DECLARATION

Bad as was the English position through Boscawen's ill-considered action, it did not entail all the consequences that were expected; for the position of France was far worse. We cannot, indeed, form any just appreciation of the British policy and the way it was set on foot, unless we look at it through French spectacles. Derided as it always is by English historians, it was regarded in France as a model of strenuous continuity and astute design beside their own.[1] So far as it had gone at this time the British policy, broadly stated, was this: in the first place, to recover the ground we had lost in America and to eject the French from the disputed area. Being at the moment the stronger at the seat of hostilities, and also at sea, it was England's advantage to precipitate matters before France could improve her position. But on the other hand to secure advantages in America was useless unless France were prevented from gaining counter advantages in Europe. To this end it was necessary to isolate her both by land and sea, to secure Hanover from attack by the aid of German and Austrian contingents, to keep France out of the Low Countries by a renewal of the Barrier Treaty and the old Triple Alliance; to compel Frederick the Great to stand neutral by threatening him with a Russian invasion in case he moved, and

[1] See the admirable summary of the English and French policies in Waddington, *Renversement des Alliances*, chap. iv.

finally, to keep Spain from coming to the aid of the French Bourbons under a renewed family compact. It was a wide scheme, well thought out; if it succeeded France would be impotent to proceed. What, then, did she do to meet the danger while the net was being so assiduously spread?

In March it had already become obvious that Louis had to face the possibility of a war with England, and there were many hands to point out to him what he ought to do. All advised an invasion of Hanover, covered by the occupation of the Austrian Netherlands and the fortification of Dunkirk. The milder counsellors, it is true, suggested that Austria and Holland should be called upon to permit this peaceably on the ground that England had broken the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, and that all the parties to it must support the punishment of her aggression. Both Austria and Holland would, of course, refuse. The refusal must then be taken as evidence that they were in league with England, and the Netherlands must be occupied forcibly to prevent an English penetration by way of Ostend and Nieuport against the French communications towards Hanover. Prussia and the German princes, Spain, Naples, and Turin, were all to be made accomplices if possible, as guaranteeing parties to the broken treaty of peace. The scheme was as wide as that of England, as well thought out, and at least as unscrupulous; but it was all to no purpose. There were other counsellors who persuaded the apathetic King that on no account must he allow a European war to develop out of the American quarrel; and as Madame de Pompadour was also of this opinion, it prevailed. Another similar scheme fared no better. It was based on the time-honoured, though sadly discredited, idea of a threatened invasion of England in the

Pretender's interest, the seizure of the Netherlands while Austria was kept busy with a Turkish invasion, and the reinvigoration of the Prussian Alliance with a view to a blow at Hanover. This too was rejected, out of the Pompadour's tenderness for Maria Theresa as well as her passion for peace.

But the outlook only grew worse, and Frederick put in his oar. "Do you know, sir," he said one day in April to the French ambassador at Berlin, shortly after Boscawen had hoisted his flag, "what I would do under the circumstances if I were King of France? As soon as the English declared war or committed any act of hostility against France, I would march a large body of troops into Westphalia ready to carry it at once into the Electorate of Hanover. It is the surest way to get a twist on that . . ."; but the epithet with which the King of Prussia described his uncle the King of England, the ambassador suppressed in his despatch.

Rouillé, the French Foreign Minister, was delighted, and proposed that Frederick should deal with Hanover himself, while France covered his invasion with an army on the Lower Rhine. But Frederick replied evasively, dwelling on the insecurity of his own position, and the project was dropped with the same levity with which it had been taken up. The fact was that Frederick had got wind of the coalition which his uncle was weaving to keep him quiet, and he was beginning to feel uncomfortable. Indeed there were already sinister rumours in France that a secret meeting had taken place on the Hanoverian frontier between the two kings, and it was just at this moment that the French court was shattered with the news of Boscawen's attack, and the capture of the *Alcide* and the *Lys*.

Though it was now the middle of July, three months

since their first warning of what to expect, not a thing had been done to meet the situation, either by diplomacy or military preparation. Surprised empty-handed, the French Ministers summoned council after council, but nothing could be settled. All that came of them were violent denunciations of British treachery such as are always to be looked for from a nation suddenly awakened from insincere negotiations by a blow before war. That was the only measure the French court saw its way to taking—to denounce England as the aggressor throughout Europe, and bide its time till Europe banned her as a breaker of the peace. It was just when Hawke's final orders were being decided, and they hoped that a show of moderation would make some impression on England and prevent her committing any further acts of hostility. There at least seemed no other hope of saving the homecoming fleets from Hawke's clutches. Finally, it was argued that by this policy of dissimulation they would gain the time necessary for arming both by land and sea, and for securing alliances. In contrast with such feeble-minded counsels the British policy was certainly a pattern of strength and directness.

As for Frederick, he could not conceal his contempt for his ally. He told the French again that their only course was immediately to assemble the largest army they could, overrun the Netherlands, and thence with the help of Denmark invade Hanover. To any suggestion that he should take a hand in the game he replied that his alliance only bound him to defend the French possessions in Europe and not those in America; and in any case, in view of the threatening attitude of Austria and Russia, he had enough to do to look after himself. The French ambassador could only protest that Frederick's truculent plan would punish England's allies and not

touch England herself. "What then will you do?" cried Frederick; "the English are your superiors at sea, and you cannot attack Hanover without a base."

That was the situation in a nutshell. In spite of the mistake she had made, England for the hour was master of the game. It was just one of those rare occasions when a decisive blow at sea might carry everything with it, and force a favourable peace. It is true that for England the strategical situation was not as good as it might have been. That so large a force had been diverted to America at the critical moment was a bad blunder. It was far greater in any case than was necessary, and the distribution of our fleet in consequence was faulty. Not a single ship of Boscawen's command had yet started for home. He was still fighting the epidemic at Halifax, and so seriously reduced was the strength of his fleet that he could barely maintain the blockade of Louisbourg and the St. Lawrence. But here again, if our strategy was faulty, that of France was deplorable. At a time when every one knew war might break out at any moment, she had committed the grave error of sending a serious proportion of her ships of the line, as transports half armed, across the Atlantic, and as though this were not enough she had split up her whole available Atlantic force into three parts, and there was no human prospect of their ever getting together again in Brest. When England is scolded for her treachery on this occasion, as she still is, it would be only charitable to remember the temptation to which she was exposed by the incredible simplicity of her adversary. The wonder is that so great a chance was not seized with greater violence.

But for the credit of the English Ministers it must be said their courage mounted with occasion. Not yet even

had the French reached the depth of their fatuity. In the face of Hawke's fleet—now on the point of putting to sea, Du Guay, who was in command of the Brest division which had gone down to Spain, was ordered to return to his port. Nothing could have suited the English better. Their object was, of course, to prevent a concentration of the scattered French squadrons and fall upon them singly. If all of them intended to make for Brest, the problem presented no strategical difficulties. Hawke could take up a commanding position off Ushant, and subject to the hazards of the sea the thing was done.

That De la Motte would soon be returning to Brest could be counted on with security. The uncertain factor was Du Guay. The English intelligence was that he had been ordered to sea for a few months' cruise to train his fleet, but this of course might cover any ulterior object. Both in Toulon and in Brest other squadrons were being brought forward with energy. Hawke's task was therefore complicated by the consideration that on the one hand he must see that our weak Mediterranean squadron was not overpowered by a junction between Du Guay and the Toulon squadron, while on the other he had to ensure that nothing got out of Brest to reinforce Du Guay. These considerations it must have been which prompted the insertion in Hawke's orders of a clause which has been universally branded by historians as having condemned him to failure. The clause was that he was on no account to extend his cruise south of Finisterre unless he had positive intelligence that it was necessary, that is, of course, that Du Guay was making for Toulon. To this restriction Hawke's failure is attributed by his admirers, but Hawke was certainly not of their opinion, so far at least as the evidence of his despatches goes. From the first he saw his way clearly to solving the

strategical problem and made no complaint except of his dearth of cruisers. To sixteen of the line he had but one useless frigate and a sloop. So he wrote on August 6th from Finisterre, and the same day the Lord Justices were issuing orders for his force to be increased by six of the line, and that he was to send in his foulest ships by threes to be cleaned, so as to maintain his fleet in efficient condition.[1]

Hawke's despatch discloses clearly enough his strategical idea. Having got to sea on July 28th, he had proceeded direct to Finisterre, the southernmost limit of his cruising-ground, to try to get news of Du Guay. None was to be had. Hawke was therefore content to remain off Finisterre long enough for neutral vessels passing southward to report his presence, and then, leaving a cruiser to watch, he slipped back for his rendezvous about midway between Finisterre and Ushant. It was this movement, as it is usually alleged, that lost him his quarry. Du Guay is said to have escaped by taking a big board to the westward, outside the two narrow limits assigned to Hawke. But Hawke's own despatch shows that he intentionally and deliberately forced this movement on Du Guay by his demonstration off Finisterre. His strategy was based on the supposition that Du Guay, having heard he was off Finisterre, would hold away to the westward in order to get round him instead of coming directly north, and thus Hawke would be able to take up a position which would cover the homeward routes not only of all the scattered French Navy squadrons, but of their principal merchantmen as well. This is certainly what he did, but not without difficulty.

The persistent bad luck that dogged Hawke's path so long was upon him. So foul was the weather that it

[1] *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters*, 89; *Out-letters*, 75.

was not till August 23rd that he made the rendezvous. There he met fresh orders, which considerably intensified and altered the situation. Hawke had scarcely been gone a week when some one grew dissatisfied with his limited instructions. On August 5th the Inner Committee met again, and before they parted they had decided upon the increase of six of the line for Hawke's force, and to authorise him to take privateers and merchantmen, as well as king's ships. Cumberland urged that the same orders should be sent to all stations, but Newcastle clung to what was left of his fence, and was able to inform Holderness with pride that he had succeeded in getting the orders confined to Hawke.[1] As strategy nothing could be more foolish or more characteristic of the Prime Minister. To exclude merchantmen from reprisal might or might not be sound policy under the circumstances, but to allow one admiral to make reprisal and forbid it to every one else was neither strategy nor policy, but mere infirmity of purpose.

These enlarged orders of course complicated the problem Hawke had to solve, especially as his promised reinforcements had not joined. It so happened, moreover, that the same day he also heard from the cruiser he had left at Finisterre that Du Guay had sailed from Cadiz a week before upon an unknown course. Hawke, however, had little doubt. If he had not gone to America, he must be making an attempt to bring in the trade. The new orders, therefore, were just in time. Two vessels were detached to Belleisle and Rochefort, while he himself changed his rendezvous to a point where he could cover L'Orient, the seat of the East Indian trade, as well as close Brest to anything coming in from the

[1] Robinson to Holderness and Newcastle to same, Aug. 6. *Newcastle Papers, Add. MSS.* 32,858.

west. The change of station which the new orders necessitated, well as it was conceived, had a serious disadvantage. For it unavoidably delayed the arrival of his reinforcements, since they would of course go to the old rendezvous. But Hawke was quite content. Convinced he had made certain that Du Guay would not dare to come northward, he was content to send one vessel to Finisterre to cruise for the French trade, and the rest he spread in a line of observation between the 47th and 48th parallels, forty leagues west of Ushant.

It was a great deal of ground to cover with the force at his command, but he was hourly expecting his six fresh ships to join, and had no misgivings.[1] But he counted without his luck. A stiff north-wester set in, and blew a heavy gale for three solid days, forcing him southward and eastward, so that he could neither reach his station nor get in touch with his reinforcements; while, to make matters worse, one of his high-born captains, having no stomach for such weather, made off home to repair more or less imaginary damages. The result was that Du Guay, coming in from the west on the very line Hawke expected, was able to run by to the northward of him on the friendly gale, and slip into Brest unperceived.[2]

Still Hawke clung to his station, ignorant of what had happened, while far and wide havoc was played with the French trade. For by the end of August the feeble

[1] *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters*, 89, Aug. 30 and Oct. 3.

[2] Gossip attributed the escape of Du Guay mainly to Lord Harry Paulet (afterwards 6th Duke of Bolton), who left the fleet at the critical moment on the plea that his sternpost was loose. Hawke, however, says nothing of this. Still Paulet, whose previous record was bad, was court-martialled, and though he was acquitted of desertion he went ever afterwards by the name of "Captain Sternpost." and was never employed again. See *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, xliv. 88, and *The Earl of Carlisle's MSS.* (*Hist. MSS. Com.*), p. 210.

attitude of France had emboldened the British Government to go the whole course, and not only Hawke, but on every station far and near officers were instructed "to seize and take by all means in your power all French ships, as well men-of-war and privateers as merchantmen, and to send them into port without embezzlement till his Majesty's pleasure be known." To Boscawen on the North American station and to Edgcumbe in the Mediterranean, to the Downs, to the Leeward Islands and Jamaica, to thirty cruiser captains in the Narrow Seas, and to others on the coast of Newfoundland, Carolina, and Virginia these orders were sped, and a great harvest was gathered in.[1]

But all that was most worth having was missed. Till the last week in December Hawke continued to battle with the weather and disease till his foul and stricken ships could stand no more, and he ran for Plymouth. Scarcely was his back turned when De la Motte appeared on the ground he had left. Boscawen's fleet, instead of improving in health, had grown worse and worse, till no adequate blockade could be maintained. De la Motte had escaped out of the Gulf of St. Lawrence untouched, and as Hawke moved out of his way in the nick of time, he got safely into Brest without having fired a shot.

For a second failure of the fleet the Ministers were by no means prepared. Their nerves had been already sorely tried. So far but one item of their widespread strategical scheme had succeeded. It was on the Nova Scotian frontier. There Captain Rous, an old privateersman, in conjunction with a military force from Halifax under Colonel Monckton, a capable staff-officer who be-

[1] *Admiralty Secretary, Out-letters*, Aug. 27. They are noted as being sent to Hawke Sept. 2nd, but his despatches quoted above show clearly previous authority had been conveyed to him some weeks earlier.

came prominent in the war, had entered the Bay of Fundy and successfully driven the French from Beauséjour and their settlements on the St. John's River. It was a neat piece of work with very small means. It recovered all the territory we claimed in that quarter, and hopes beat high. The Ministers were expecting any day to hear that Braddock was advancing towards Quebec in irresistible force. But instead had come tidings that he had not even got so far as Fort Duquesne when he and his whole force were cut to pieces.

So against all expectation the tables had been turned. Owing to Boscawen's failure and Braddock's disaster, the French, instead of being the weaker, were actually the stronger in America. Our prestige with the Indians, on which so much depended, was gone. No one could tell where it would end, and since Hawke had come in it was clear we had let slip our chance at sea almost as badly as we had on land. Something like a reprimand was consequently Hawke's welcome. My lords wanted to know why he had changed the rendezvous allotted to him, and why he had come in just when De la Motte was expected. Hawke, after his manner, replied somewhat tartly that he had come in because it was impossible from the state of his ships to stay out, and had changed his rendezvous because they had changed his orders. It is from this letter that we know the strategical idea on which he acted, and so lucidly was it reasoned that my lords hastened to assure the King's favourite officer that they had intended no reprimand.

The King himself was coming home, bringing his sheaves with him, but no one could conceal from himself how poor the harvest was. Indeed the diplomatic operations on which the whole of the British policy was

designed had broken down scarcely less completely than those of the army and the navy. As we have seen, the corner-stone of the whole fabric had been a revival of the old Triple Alliance with Holland and Austria, and the renewal of the Barrier Treaty. Both had entirely failed. Austria had demanded a certain contingent of British troops for the defence of the Netherlands. The British Government had refused, and upon this rock the negotiations split. By the highest modern critics this rigidity on the part of the British Ministers is still severely condemned. The effect was certainly alarming. Despairing of her ancient ally, Austria turned to France and opened those negotiations which were to end in turning upside down the whole system of European alliances. Holland on her part began at once to hold back; little or no progress had been made with our overtures with the Northern powers; the attitude of Spain was still uncertain; and it looked as though, instead of isolating France, we had isolated ourselves. A little more generosity in dealing with Austria, our foreign critics hold, would have been well worth the gain of cementing the time-honoured alliance. But to see the matter thus is to see it with Continental eyes, and to miss the essence of the British attitude. The whole purpose of the negotiations was to confine the threatening war to the theatres beyond the sea where lay our special objects and our peculiar strength. Our controlling aim was to ensure that we should not be drawn into a European struggle and forced to fight for our ends where our power was weakest. To purchase the Austrian alliance at the price of sending a serious military force into the very cockpit of Europe was to ensure the consequences which it was the sole object of the alliance to prevent. Moreover, it was to offer a price

which the instinct of the country had determined not to pay. The spirit with which the people of a country go into a war is as much an element of strategical calculation as its army or its navy. For a maritime and Colonial war with France the people of this country were eager and resolute, but of Continental wars they had had enough. For them it meant fighting for the patrimony of their German king, and they would have no more of it. It was this instinct which Pitt was already voicing in opposition to the court. Perhaps his greatest inspiration was that he recognised its truth and force when he came to power. Instead of trying to ignore or crush it, he made it the foundation of his system of strategy and, with the genius of a true War Minister, used it as his driving power.

How strong the instinct was became apparent so soon as the results of the King's negotiations were laid before Parliament. Failing Austria, he had plunged into a heavy engagement with Russia. On September 30th had been signed a convention whereby, in return for a retaining fee of £100,000 a year, the Czarina undertook to maintain in Livonia an army of 55,000 men. In case of an attack being made upon any of the King's dominions, including Hanover, a corps of 45,000 men would move by land to his assistance, while the remaining 10,000 would operate by sea in conjunction with a flotilla of forty or fifty galleys. In return the King engaged on his part to send a fleet into the Baltic, and to pay a subsidy of half a million a year while the operations lasted. Besides this heavy naval and financial liability, he brought home an agreement to subsidise the 8000 Hessians. As both arrangements involved a money grant, they had to be laid before Parliament for ratification. Pitt was already in rebellion. Though as

Paymaster of the Forces he was a member of the Government, he openly denounced the arrangement, and persuaded his friend Legge, Chancellor of the Exchequer, to refuse to sign the Hessian warrant. In vain Newcastle implored his forbearance; and believing, as his view of human nature taught him, that the refractory Minister only wanted something more for himself, pressed him to enter the Cabinet. Nothing would bend him, and so soon as Parliament met he broke out with all his old vehemence against the subordination of British to Hanoverian interests.

The question was raised immediately the House met as an amendment to the address. The debate that followed was the longest but one on record. It was past one in the morning—after a ten-hours' sitting—before Pitt rose, and in one of the most famous of his speeches he held the House spellbound for an hour and a half. After generally denouncing the Government and the treaties, he clearly laid down his conception of true British strategy. "These incoherent, un-British measures," he cried, "are what are adopted instead of our proper force—it was our navy that secured the restoration of the Barrier of Flanders in the late war by making us masters of Cape Breton. After that war, with even that indemnification in our hands, we were forced to rejoice at a bad peace." He had already reminded the House that the Ministers had undertaken the present war "for the long-injured, long-neglected, long-forgotten people of America." "Yet," he went on, in denouncement of his colleagues, "how soon have they forgotten in what cause they took up arms! Are these treaties English measures? Are they preventive measures? Are they not measures of aggression? Will they not provoke Prussia and light up a general war?

. . . They must mean a land war, and how preposterously do they meditate it! Hanover is the only spot you have left to fight upon. Can you now force the Dutch to join you? . . . Subsidies annihilated ten millions in the last war; our navy brought in twelve millions. This is the day I hope shall give the colour to my life: though it is a torrent I fear nothing will resist."

The effect of the speech, so Horace Walpole tells us, was profound. Fox, who had been induced to join the tottering Government, tried to reply, but he was too sleepy to succeed. He soon sat down, and "the attention of the House," says Walpole, "was entirely put an end to, as it usually was, by Admiral Vernon," the veteran naval hero of the late war. In the end the address was passed unamended, and before the week was out Fox was Foreign Secretary, and Pitt and his friends were dismissed.

Pitt's views of grand strategy, as his great speech revealed, though sound as far as they went, had not yet reached the maturity they afterwards attained. At this time he thought Hanover ought to be ignored. France and Prussia should be permitted to occupy it if they wished, while we concentrated our whole force and energy upon the sea and the special objects of the war. In this way he considered we should be in a position, when it came to making peace, to insist on Hanover being restored, and as for the King's loss by the occupation, Pitt said he would rather pay him five millions as indemnity than be entangled in the old ruinous system of subsidising treaties. To concentrate on the special objects of the war, to use the navy, our natural force, to the utmost limit of its power, and to recognise the narrow limitation of our military possi-

bilities on the Continent, were all of course sound enough; but to neglect containing operations was wrong. It was obvious that if we permitted the enemy at starting to get into her hand such a card as Hanover, we should certainly be compelled, when it came to terms of peace, to sacrifice much that we might have gained, as Pitt admitted we had been compelled to do in the case of Flanders in the last war. Therefore the strategy was incomplete unless the concentration on the special objects was buttressed by containing operations in Europe, which would keep our enemy occupied and prevent her getting hold of so valuable a security.

In defence of Pitt's attitude, however, two considerations must be urged. In the first place, he had every reason to be sure that, although the subsidising treaties were devised for containing purposes, that is, for the defence of Hanover, operations under them would sooner or later become the main operations if a Ministry dominated by the King were to conduct the war, and that the operations in America would become secondary and be starved. In short, the grave mistake would be made of trying to conquer America in Europe. This is the radically unsound idea which is popularly supposed to have inspired Pitt. The truth is, as we shall see, that it was the exact converse of what he called his "system." Superficially such a policy might seem to be justified on the strategical maxim that the greater includes and carries with it the less. But this is a maxim which is only applicable in its fullest sense to unlimited wars—wars with an unlimited object. In these, of course, it is best to aim at the greatest object you can reach. But it is not so in a limited war. There you must strike at the limited or special object of the war, and be content with a containing defensive elsewhere. This was Pitt's ultimate

system—to conquer America in America by the utmost concentration of effort that was compatible with preventing France from making successful counter-strokes in Europe. As yet, however, he did not see his way to arranging such containing movements in Europe. But, probably unknown to him—and this is the second point in his defence—the means was already showing its head.

Ever since August, when our negotiations with Russia began to be known in Berlin, and when Austria was turning her face to France, Frederick the Great had begun to nibble at the idea of an understanding with England. It was as complete a change of front as that which Austria was contemplating. With the utmost suspicion on both sides the wary game proceeded, till England began to throw out hints that her only desire was to see the peace kept in Northern Europe while she fought out her American quarrel with France. She flattered Frederick by letting him know that in her opinion he dominated the situation in the North as completely as Spain did in the South, and if he felt inclined to exert his influence, as England wished, she might be able to guarantee his ill-gotten hold on Silesia, to relieve him of all anxiety on his Russian frontier, and to pay him a handsome indemnity in respect of an old and rankling grievance about some ships she had captured in the late war. A week or two's hesitation followed till our treaty with Russia was signed. Frederick asked to see it. So soon as it was laid before Parliament it was sent to him, and the effect was instantaneous. With one of those characteristically quick decisions which were so much in contrast with his habitual wariness, he immediately instructed his ambassador in London to say he was ready to guarantee the neutrality of Germany on the terms of the British offer.

So the thing was done, and this was not all. About the same time it became known that Keene and Wall had secured the neutrality of Spain. In vain France had pointed to Boscawen's aggression. Wall replied it was only the natural sequence of the previous aggressions in America, and that in any case she had put herself out of court by beginning to restore the port of Dunkirk. Holland alone held out against British diplomacy, declaring there was no *casus fœderis* to operate the Anglo-Dutch alliance, as England was herself the aggressor—of so much value, and so easily slipped are treaties of defence. Holland, however, was a minor consideration. The main elements of a great containing policy for keeping France quiet in Europe were in England's hands, and her cautious defensive opening of the struggle seemed justified by the diplomatic results that had been secured. But before all this was known, Pitt was in opposition, and unable to modify the attitude he had taken up. That attitude was irreconcilable without disguise. At every stage the subsidy treaties were resisted with his utmost violence. The Government had done and could do nothing right. They proposed a vote for 50,000 seamen and 35,000 troops, which was then regarded as all the country could provide under normal means of recruiting. But even this Pitt could only seize upon as an occasion for lashing the Government for not having taken such precautions long before. Reckless of the effect he was producing on public opinion by his exposure of the Government's incapacity, he intensified matters by painting, as only he could paint, the forlorn condition of the country exposed defenceless to any power that could land on our shores. In the vehemence of his convictions he was sowing the wind, and the country was soon to reap the whirlwind in a panic.

But the end was not yet. Though Pitt in one last impassioned protest reminded the House of Commons how Athens put herself on board her fleet and recovered her land because she fought where she could be superior, both the Prussian and the Hessian treaties were approved. The Lords did the same. The Houses adjourned for Christmas, and still war had not come.

In the face of Frederick's growing coolness France could not stir. Failing Spain, her whole plan of action, so far as the court was capable of a plan of action, rested ultimately on Prussian co-operation. After much vacillation, it had been decided to attempt to carry on the war at sea and in the Colonies, and at all hazards to prevent its spreading to Europe. Such a policy was to play into the hands of the enemy; to permit us, in the words with which Pitt struck the keynote of his system, "to fight where we could be superior." Nothing could have been more ill-advised strategically, but Louis's and the Pompadour's weary devotion to peace overrode every other consideration. It had been resolved therefore to swallow for a time the affront of Boscawen's attack and Hawke's sweep-up of the French trade, and meanwhile to set to work assiduously to resuscitate the navy.

It was believed by Louis's Government that early in the new year France could have fifty of the line and as many frigates in commission, and be in a position to take the offensive in some way still undefined. Meanwhile their strategy was to divide what ships they had ready for sea into several defensive squadrons, one for the Mediterranean, one for the Channel and Brittany, and one for the Ocean and the American line of passage and communication. Such an arrangement was merely conforming to the British distribution, and that it did not warrant absolute confidence is not surprising. They

therefore proceeded to provide for the not unlikely event of England's securing some decisive success, either in America or at sea. If anything of the kind happened, they would make their appeal to the signatories of the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle—to the concert of Europe, as we should say now—for the punishment of England as a common disturber of the peace. If this failed, as was also not unlikely, there was nothing left but an attack on Hanover and a European war. It was here that Frederick came into play. Could he still be tempted to take a hand, the war, deplorable as it was to the indolence of Versailles, would present but few difficulties.

It was the eleventh hour, and there was no time to be lost. For some months past the French Ministers had been disturbed by rumours of a *rapprochement* between Frederick and his uncle of England, and it had been decided to supersede their ambassador at Berlin by the Duc de Nivernais. The idea was that he should proceed on a kind of special mission, to take Frederick into their confidence and endeavour to renew the moribund alliance. But first they had to make up their minds as to what they had to confide, and this was a long process. Side by side with their nerveless deliberations the *pourparlers* between London and Berlin went on, but Frederick up to the last was able to quiet the suspicions of Versailles by still posing as the friend of France; and month after month Nivernais waited in Paris for his instructions. It was not till the new year had begun that he finally reached Berlin; and before he had time to despatch a rosy account of his first audience, the Anglo-Prussian Alliance had been signed at Westminster behind his back.

Ignorant that England's deep game was already won, Nivernais and the French court were still confident of success. The moment was even seized to send an ulti-

matum to London. Ever since Boscawen's affair had broken off diplomatic relations, informal negotiations had been going on between the two courts. England, as we know, was hoping to manœuvre France into a position in which she could do nothing but give in; and France, being as yet unready, wished to gain time. Now neither party had any reason to prolong the negotiations, and the last week of 1755 the French sent in their final demands. They were really nothing but a defiance, and were obviously intended to provoke a declaration of war. If the British Government would make complete and immediate restitution of the French ships "piratically" seized and release the 8000 seamen she had prisoners, Louis would consider a renewal of the negotiations for the delimitation of the American frontiers. So insolent did such a demand appear that the hot-heads in London were for declaring war at once, but quieter counsels prevailed. It was rightly argued that, in view of our relations with Prussia, Spain, and the Dutch, we must still avoid the appearance of aggression; and finally, towards the end of January, a curt negative answer was sent justifying the seizure of the ships as lawful reprisal for the hostilities which the French had begun in America. Thus the odium of declaring war was thrown back upon France, and the correctness of our attitude preserved.

In view of the whole position, of our unreadiness for war on land, and the delicate condition of foreign relations, the Government can hardly be blamed for the defensive attitude they took up. One factor, however, had been left out of account—a factor of eternal interest. No sooner had the French ultimatum been rejected than the panic which, with the best intentions in the world, Pitt and his friends had been brewing at Westminster,

began to spread itself all over the country. It was unwarrantable, almost unaccountable, but none the less a real thing, a real factor in the strategical problem as worthy of study and diagnosis as any other factor. It is a commonplace to-day, wherever the question of National Defence is discussed, to dwell with anxiety upon the possibilities of sound strategy being distorted by the apprehensions of the people. It is spoken of, moreover, as a danger to which democratic nations are peculiarly obnoxious, and the dictum is accepted as a truism. But is it so? At the very outset of the inquiry we find ourselves compelled to cast this opinion into the crucible. Nowhere in our history, or perhaps in any other, is there a more glaring case of strategy being distorted into well-punished error by apprehension of invasion than at the opening of the Seven Years' War. But England was not then a democratic country. Its constitution was thoroughly aristocratic, and it was the aristocracy that brewed the panic.

The plan on which the French intended to conduct the war at the time they sent in their ultimatum we have already seen. It became known in its fullest details to the British Ministers some time before it was communicated by Nivernais to Frederick, and as it consisted of little more than a bad form of maritime defence it caused little or no alarm. The channel by which the information reached Newcastle is curious. At this time there was no more favoured diplomat in Paris than Bunge, the Swedish Minister, and no more favoured court than that of Stockholm. Baulked of her hope of naval aid from Spain, France was pursuing Mazarin's old policy of seeking it in Sweden. It was, moreover, a natural counter-move to the British machinations in the Baltic to seek an understanding

with Sweden, and in testimony of good faith it would appear that the French frankly communicated their war plans to Bunge. As these confidences were made he regularly communicated them to Höpken, his chief in Stockholm, and as regularly, by some mysterious means, his despatches found their way into Newcastle's bureau.[1]

The first of those important letters was received on December 23, 1755, and was followed and completed by another on January 6th. The two despatches contained word for word the whole of what Nivernais was to communicate to Frederick, with full details of the intended distribution of the fleet, number of registered seamen, flag-officers available, and privateer stations, as well as of the alternative method of falling back on a land war, if they failed to succeed at sea.

Newcastle, as usual, handed on the information to Hardwicke for his opinion, and begged him to refer it to the First Lord of the Admiralty. The shallow Prime Minister stood as much as ever in awe of his inscrutable First Lord. "Everything," he wrote to Lord Hardwicke, "that comes from me to my Lord Anson does not make the impression which I think it should. I wish you would talk to him on these advices, but don't let him know whence they came." The meaning of Newcastle's complaint was that in his view, as we have seen, every department of State ought to devote its patronage primarily to the preservation of his Parliamentary majority, and Anson sturdily refused to accept this view of the primary functions of the navy. Nothing is more characteristic of Newcastle's shameless views of administration than the present instance. Its enormity is clear

[1] *Newcastle Papers, Add. MSS.* 32,860–4. The series extends from Dec. 8, 1755, to April 9, 1756, when it suddenly ceases.

from the way in which Lord Hardwicke apologised for Anson in his reply. He explained that Anson had, in fact, a great regard for his chief, but that he really could not give companies in the marines to officers who had been turned out of the army in disgrace.

At the same time he gave Newcastle Lord Anson's opinion of the French scheme. He agreed they would be able, as they said, to commission nearly fifty of the line, but not quite so soon as they asserted, since the French estimate included several new ships not yet complete. As to the strategy, he regarded the plan "a weak one, and such as England may be well able to deal with." Its main defect, Anson considered, was "the great subdivision of their force, which aims at guarding as many points as we have to guard," meaning, in modern phraseology, there was no initiative, no concentration for offence, but a mere conformity to our own distribution. Hardwicke said the same criticism had occurred "to one so ignorant as I am." The main intention, he thought, was to destroy the British trade, "which," he added, "seems a slow way to bring about a peace, and in the meantime the trade of France may be more distressed by our fleet and privateers."

What struck the wise Lord Chancellor as most remarkable in the plan was that "it contains no scheme or hint of any scheme for striking any great blow against England by way of invasion or otherwise." This was the more remarkable, since our intelligencers during the past months had been constantly sending in reports that an invasion was intended. Still Hardwicke could only hope the last information was true, though he seriously doubted it. He considered that an invasion undertaken in a formidable manner would hamper us by destroying our credit more than any war on our commerce. Cer-

tainly the great lawyer's grasp and modernity in strategical thought is remarkable.[1]

His doubts were as well founded as they were acute and well reasoned. It so happened that the British answer to the ultimatum reached Paris almost at the same time that Nivernais was sending on his disturbing discovery that a treaty between Prussia and England was signed. The effect was instantaneous. France found herself face to face with a situation to which her original war-plan would not apply. All chance of attacking Hanover was gone as completely as her hope of being able to get on equal terms with her enemy at sea, and she was forced into that counsel of despair which she had used so often before and was to use so often again. Her only chance was to strike hard and quick, and at all costs, at her enemy's heart. Up to this time, so our intelligencers reported, there had been many projects of invasion put forward, but all had been rejected. The internal state of Great Britain offered no chance for a small force as it did in the last war, and it was agreed that a fleet of transports numerous enough to carry a large force could not evade the English fleet.[2] But now at all hazards an invasion must be attempted. There was, of course, no concealing such an heroic resolution. Our intelligencers at once began to report large movements of troops to Brittany and Normandy, and preparations in the rivers as though an invasion in flat-bottomed boats were intended from Brest and Havre. "Belleisle," wrote one of them, "told a friend of mine it must be attempted, though they were sure to lose all the troops and vessels of the expedition."[3]

1 *Newcastle Papers, Add. MSS.* 32,861; Newcastle to Hardwicke, Dec. 28; Hardwicke to Newcastle, Dec. 29.

2 "French Intelligence" (received Dec. 4), *ibid.*, Nov. 21.

3 *Newcastle Papers, Add. MSS.* 32,862, Jan. 26.

The idea of sacrificing an expeditionary force to the ultimate objects of the war is one which we regard as essentially modern; whether it really proceeded from Marshal Belleisle we cannot tell, but his was certainly the energy which suddenly forced the listless Court of Versailles into decisive action. For some time past his influence had been growing, and the shock of the Anglo-Prussian treaty gave it the last convincing touch. Some time previously, at his country house, he had drawn up "an extended plan of offensive war against England." He was now summoned to court, his scheme adopted, he himself made Commander-in-chief of the whole Atlantic Coast from Dunkirk to Bayonne, and by February 5th Newcastle was writing to the Duke of Devonshire, the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, that the Marshal had 60,000 men quartered in the parts facing our shores.[1] It was impossible, he said, to move a man to America from England, as had been intended. The troops that were wanted must go from Ireland. Not only was there not a man to spare in England, but they were sending in haste for the Hessians whom they had taken into pay and were demanding from the Dutch the contingent they were bound to furnish under the old defensive treaty. So the alarm began, but it was in the Cabinet and not in the counties that it was born. In vain Pitt and his friend Charles Townshend, busy in pushing through the House their Bill for the revival and reorganisation of the militia, inveighed against so demoralising a measure as the introduction of foreign mercenaries. Pitt's own reckless denunciation of the Government and their unreadiness had done its work. Reports of vast preparations in Brest and Toulon, of privateers swarming out of every port, of troops still

[1] *Ibid.*, Bunge to Höpken, Jan. 31; Newcastle to Devonshire, Feb. 5.

marching to the coast from the furthest parts of France, continued to alarm the Cabinet, and drove the well-tuned country into abject panic. At last, on February 14th, was received from The Hague a complete account of Belleisle's plan. It came from Colonel Joseph Yorke, Lord Hardwicke's promising son, who was there as envoy trying to persuade the Dutch, standing sullen between the devil and the deep sea, that a *casus fœderis* had arisen. Ten days later his information was confirmed in every detail by another of those useful intercepted despatches of Bunge's, and the whole of Belleisle's brilliantly conceived scheme was laid bare.

The strategical idea on which the plan was based was evasion, not mere evasion by luck, but evasion elaborately prepared by confusing the enemy, and forcing us to weaken our defence by dissipation. To this end the attempt on the British Isles was to be accompanied by a blow in the Mediterranean at Minorca. For the whole project Belleisle demanded 100,000 men, of whom the greater part were to be cantoned along the coast from Dunkirk to Cherbourg, so as to threaten England from "Cornwall to Canterbury." To convoy the transports, which were assembling in various ports, the Brest and Rochefort squadrons were to combine. The difficulties of the operation were not disguised. It was seen that the whole plan of embarkation was liable to be modified by English counter-action. But against such interference Belleisle took yet further precaution. In order to avoid the well-known difficulties of an oversea invasion in force, and in order to compel the English still further to divide their resources, he adopted, instead of a true invasion, three simultaneous incursions, one in Ireland, one in Scotland, and one in England. Two of these, Bunge said, were probably intended as feints or diversions. The third—

probably the English attack—would be the real one. Even so he did not mean to hazard his whole force upon the sea at once, but to hold back part of it as a *corps de reserve* to support the real attack when it had secured a *pied à terre*. The praticability of the actual crossing he believed to be demonstrated by the fact that smugglers constantly passed in row-boats; these craft might be added to the military flat boats already prepared, with their masters as pilots. As to evasion, the English themselves, he said, owned it was possible, given a southerly wind which would keep them in port, or a calm dark night at that time of the year. In short, tried by the supreme test, it was a legitimate operation of war—that is to say, the advantage to be gained by success was greatly in excess of the loss that failure would entail.

Such, so Bunge tells us, was the Marshal's own view, and it is difficult not to endorse it. At first sight, no doubt, the whole idea looks insane enough to modern eyes, but in truth it was not so, if we remember what its object was, and what the surrounding conditions. By our superiority at sea we had made it impossible for France to take the offensive in the area of the limited object of the war; by our diplomacy we had made it impossible for her to retaliate with an eccentric attack on Hanover. A direct attack upon us was all that was left. But it will be urged, without command of the sea the conquest of England was impossible? The answer is, conquest was not the object aimed at. The object was merely to deal such a blow as would make a reasonable peace more acceptable in the eyes of Englishmen than a prolongation of the war. We have but to remember that only ten years had gone by since the Pretender's victorious march to Derby had thrown London into a panic; that our military resources were now much smaller and not so

well organised as they were then; and we can see that the forlorn hope of France was far from hopeless. It was of course a desperate expedient, but it was the outcome of sober and instructed calculation by a soldier of experience. The secondary part of the scheme shows how thoroughly he grasped the risk, and left no stone unturned to reduce the chances against him.

In Belleisle's original plan, as Bunge explained it, the Minorca expedition was to be executed by no more than 4000 men, carried in the ordinary local trading craft, and escorted by the Toulon squadron. That is to say, it was a strictly minor operation, of true diversion strength only, so as not to weaken the real offensive movement. But, as all well designed diversions should do, it contained the ulterior possibilities of being developed into an eccentric attack. If it failed in drawing down any large force to oppose it, it would succeed in placing in French hands a valuable asset. If, however, the eccentric attack proved impossible, it would be because it had succeeded as a diversion in drawing down upon it a superior force, the essential postulate of all sound diversions. Belleisle's own justification of this part of his plan was directed to its practicability. It was justified, he said, firstly, because Port Mahon was badly fortified on the land side, and therefore open to a *coup de main*, and secondly, because if the blow missed a safe retreat was open to Genoa, Corsica, or even the Spanish ports. Spain, of course, must not be told, but when the place was taken it could be offered her as the price of her intervention in the war. Here again, therefore, the military and political advantage of success appeared to outweigh the slender chance of serious loss in the attempt. One chance of failure Belleisle had not taken into account. It was the one as we shall see that turned up—the chance of the expedition being caught in

such a posture that it could neither take Mahon nor leave it—but as luck would have it that was also the one chance which the English had not foreseen, and which their commander, from pure lack of strategical imagination, proved unable to turn to account.

The situation which the British thus had to face at the end of February 1756, is full of interest and instruction. The more so, since it has seldom or never been regarded seriously by historians, but merely as an occasion to pour ridicule on every one concerned. The truth is the situation was by no means easy, and we have but to reduce it to strategical terms to see how correct were the preventive measures taken. Two strategical maxims must first be recalled—one that, as a form of war, defence is stronger than offence; the other, which flows from it, that where we wish to take the weaker form, that is the offensive, we must concentrate the utmost possible force upon it, and be content to use elsewhere forces only strong enough to act on the defensive. On this basis all great strategical conceptions are built up. But when we say that defence is the stronger form of war, that is that, if soundly designed, it requires smaller force, we are of course speaking only of one certain line of operations. If we do not know the general line of operation on which the enemy intends to attack, and so cannot mass our defence upon it, then defence is weak, because we are compelled to distribute our force so as to be strong enough to stop the enemy on any line of operations he may adopt. The special advantages of the defence are thus lost. Therefore, when the enemy's objective, or his line of operation, is uncertain, and you cannot find an interior position which will cover all probable objectives and lines of operation, it is usually considered best to take the offensive. If, however, you cannot take the

offensive, you have no choice but to fall back on that extremely untrustworthy form of war—defence with the enemy's objective uncertain.

This was the case in 1756. The French had adopted a plan of campaign which could not be turned by a direct offensive. The plan of attack they were preparing, that is invasion over an uncommanded sea, though the weakest of all forms of offence, and the easiest to deal with by direct counterstroke when it is in progress, is also the hardest to prevent by a true counter offensive. It is a point, it is true, upon which in 1803 two of our greatest strategists, Hood and Nelson, differed. Hood believed in a strict defensive attitude until the offensive movement developed; Nelson in the possibility of forestalling it by direct attack. Nelson was in command of our Channel defence. He was able to put his faith to the test at Boulogne, and got soundly beaten for his pains. The truth seems to be that Hood's view was right and Nelson's wrong. You cannot attack such a force without a combined operation, and in these cases to attack is usually to throw away one of the greatest advantages war can give. It is usually said that it is best to take the offensive whenever and wherever you are strong enough, but there is a better thing than this. Better than taking the offensive yourself, is to force the offensive upon an enemy who is too weak for it. That is what our diplomacy and our operations before declaration had done for us in this case. Our true line of action, therefore, was not to try to prevent the movement by taking the offensive ourselves, but to turn it to advantage by a counter attack held back till the enemy was hopelessly committed to an operation beyond his strength. This is the idea that appears to have been in Hood's mind in 1803. But such a course demands a degree of resolu-

tion and a fearlessness of risk such as few commanders and fewer governments have ever possessed. The usual and accepted course is a compromise. Instead of a direct blow at the force in question, or of a strict defensive till it moves, we seize in force its line of passage and communication. The normal result is that the enemy abandons the attempt at least in force, and while avoiding risk we forego the opportunity of striking a crushing blow, such as Hood had in his mind.

It was this compromise the Government adopted in 1756 as a matter of course. In any case the condition of our land forces permitted nothing else. Seeing how many and incalculable are the chances of the sea, Hood's game is most dangerous when the attacking force is small. For small forces at sea evasion is too easy. Unless, therefore, our land forces are large enough, and sufficiently trained to compel the enemy to use comparatively large numbers, we should do our best to prevent his sailing at all. It is not worth while risking much to destroy a mere raid. A great military power will hardly feel the loss. Whereas, if it once got to sea, it might easily escape an observing fleet, especially in those days of defective intelligence, and produce all the effect which Belleisle looked for against a nation so wholly unprepared ashore as we were then.

If then, and this was where things went wrong, the British Government concentrated an excessive attention upon the Channel they cannot be blamed. It was there, according to their information, the enemy's main offensive was concentrated, and under the circumstances they had no choice but to mass against it a naval force which must render the movement impossible so far as lay in their power. The threatened expedition against Minorca, according to the same information, was a trap to induce

them to divide their fleet, and if they refused to detach more than was absolutely necessary for its bare defence, no strategy could be sounder. To do more would have been to fall into the net that had been spread before their eyes. It is easy enough to join in the chorus of ridicule which has been the portion of the Newcastle administration, but it is more profitable to consider how difficult it would be under the same circumstances not to repeat the same mistakes ourselves.

CHAPTER V

THE FRENCH OPENING—MINORCA

The gravest charge that is usually made against Newcastle is that, having had long warning of the intended attack on Minorca, he took no steps to protect it. This charge is unfounded. It is true that during the autumn of 1755 constant reports of activity in Toulon were received, but these preparations soon ceased. Orders to get the squadron to sea were countermanded from Paris, owing mainly to the action of British privateers on the Provençal coast making the accumulation of naval stores impossible. Nor was the Toulon squadron then intended for operations against Minorca. It was only part of the original feeble plan for keeping a defensive squadron wherever we had one, in order to hold the command of the sea in dispute. It was not till the success of the British negotiations with Spain and Prussia was confirmed, that the idea of an attack on Minorca was entertained. Till then there was no necessity for France to hazard the dangers of a direct offensive against England, and it was only as an accessory to such an operation that the idea of Minorca was conceived at all.

No really trustworthy information on the subject was obtained until the receipt of Bunge's intercepted despatch on February 25, 1756. Up to that time our ordinary intelligencers in France were dwelling almost entirely upon the invasion project, and if they mentioned the Toulon expedition at all it was with the assurance that

it was only a feint. It is true the Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry subsequently found that on January 17th our consul at Genoa had sent home definite information that the surprise of Minorca was intended, and that his despatch came to hand on February 3rd. But they gave no reason why Newcastle should have attached special importance to the news, seeing how extremely unlikely it was that if it was true our consul should have got hold of it. The natural presumption was that it was false news, deliberately placed in the consul's way in order to mislead. In much more likely quarters nothing had been heard of it, nor is it even certain that the operations had then been decided on.

Bunge's letter was really the first credible intimation. Newcastle was certainly slow in acting upon it. But we must remember that it required careful consideration, and the whole energy of the Admiralty was absorbed in getting Hawke to sea, and here no lack of energy was shown. Only two days after Bunge's information was received, Hawke was ordered to blockade the French coast. A week later, on March 8th, Byng was warned to get ready for sea a squadron of ten of the line. Commodore Edgecombe, in the Mediterranean, had already one sixty and two fifties, and Anson believed the combined force would be superior to anything the French could get to sea from Toulon. The following day the whole matter was laid before the Secret Committee. "The intelligence concerning the French intended attempt on Minorca was read," so the minute runs. "Their lordships are humbly of opinion that as strong a squadron as can be spared from hence should be got ready to send into the Mediterranean."[1]

[1] *Newcastle Papers* (*Cabinet Memoranda*), *Add. MSS.* 32,966, f. 373, March 9, 1756.

No increase, however, could be made in the force allocated to Byng. It was not till a week later that by straining every nerve Hawke got to sea. Then it was with only eleven of the line and three fifties, and so serious was the outlook that five more of the line were sent him before Byng was allowed to go. This, of course, was a mistake. Hawke's fleet was unnecessarily strong, but who could tell. Conflans was in Brest with twelve of the line preparing for sea; others were at Rochefort. France was still pressing Denmark and Sweden for assistance, and thousands of troops were camped or in movement upon the Norman and Breton coasts. We could not know how destitute was the Brest dockyard, how denuded and exposed the coast defences. We could not know how officer after officer had shrunk from the task of invasion when he came to look at it, or how the late enthusiasm for offence had melted into a nervousness of counter-attack as demoralising as our own. Yet so it was. The main part of Belleisle's scheme had been abandoned for an anxious and unready defensive, and the secondary part had become the main operation. Yet not a word of this had come from our own officers in the Mediterranean. General Blakeney, acting Governor of Minorca, a veteran of eighty-four years of age, reported the preparations in Toulon, and his own arrangements with the Commodore for defending himself. Edgecombe, too, merely mentioned the armament in the Provençal ports, and coolly discussed whether its object was Minorca or Corsica, or even a mere feint to distract attention from the Channel. It was not till February 24th that Sir Benjamin Keene, our vigilant and astute ambassador at Madrid, expressed any concern at all; and even then his warning was accompanied by a well-reasoned conviction that a descent on Great Britain was the main operation. Marshal Belleisle, he reminded

Fox, had boasted when he was a British prisoner that with a single regiment of *gressins* he would undertake to march from one end of England to another. And as for the probabilities of the situation Keene pointed out to his new chief that "the great and salutary measures taken by his Majesty by his preventive treaties have left no door open, nor even a possibility of employing their formidable army on the Continent. This, then, is the only means left them for pouring forth their wrath against us."[1] If, then, such men as Keene on the spot, with his wide grasp of affairs and penetrating sagacity, could be so deceived, it is useless to disguise the fact that the French by their clever co-ordination of land and sea forces had stolen our thunder and baffled us. From no single expert, so far as we know, did Newcastle get so much as a hint that his strategy was incorrect.

The truth is that instead of pouring easy contempt upon those who had to bear the great responsibility, we should be better employed in noting the intense possibilities of strategical confusion that lie in a well co-ordinated use of army and navy. A more striking example hardly exists of the disturbing power of eccentric attack by combined operations. A military force brought down to a coast where a fleet is preparing for sea must always be a threat of offence which cannot be ignored.[2]

[1] *Parliamentary Debates*, III., 362.

[2] How serious was the threat of invasion appears from a return of the "coast camps" when they reached their maximum in September:—

La Hogue	4 battalions,	0 squadrons.
St. Malo	10 ,,	4 ,,
Dunkirk	18 ,,	2 ,,
Calais	14 ,,	4 ,,
Dieppe	8 ,,	2 ,,
Havre	19 ,,	4 ,,
Harfleur	4 ,,	2 ,,
Granville	12 ,,	4 ,,
St. Valéry	4 ,,	0 ,,
	93 battalions,	22 squadrons.

There were other smaller camps, and all were being exercised in embarka-

The army may be a mere defensive precaution, but the presence of a fleet in conjunction with it will alter its character in the enemy's eyes, and attract a proportionally powerful force to oppose it. Far away another fleet, rendered innocent in appearance by a small display of troops, may suddenly declare itself a formidable combined operation and strike, where there is little to resist it and a valuable point to be won. Such well-adjusted combinations of land and sea force present probably the most difficult and confusing of all strategical problems. Their power was Pitt's great discovery—the method of employing them his strategical legacy—and it is in the skilful and instructed use of them that lies the greatest power of a maritime state to this day.

How difficult and uncertain was the situation the ministers had to deal with is clear from the final instructions which Byng received. They reached him at Spithead on April 1st, the day the final contingent of the Channel fleet sailed to join Hawke under Admiral Holburne. He is informed that in view of the several advices which had been received relating to "the supposed intention of the French to attack the island of Minorca," he is to proceed with the utmost expedition to Gibraltar with ten of the line.[1] His first care on arrival was to be "to inquire whether any French squadron had come through the Straits." If so, he must try to ascertain "their number and force, and if any of them were transports." And as it was possible such a fleet

tion and disembarkation. Most of them were complete in July, and the total cannot have been much less than 50,000 men (Pajol, *Guerres Sous Louis XV.*, vol. vi. p. 415, *et seq.*).

[1] *Ramillies*, 90; *Culloden*, 74; *Buckingham*, 68; *Captain*, 64; *Revenge*, 64; *Trident*, 64; *Lancaster*, 66; *Intrepid*, 64; *Kingston*, 60; *Defiance*, 60. The instructions are printed by Beatson, *Naval and Military Memoirs*, 1727–83, vol. iii. p. 113.

might be destined for America, he was to detach as many ships thither as would make the Halifax squadron of six of the line superior to the French. If, however, nothing had passed out, he was then "to go on without a moment's loss of time to Minorca," and "if," the instructions proceed, "you find any attack made upon that island by the French, you are to use all possible means in your power for its relief. If you find no such attack made, you are to proceed off Toulon" to blockade it, "and you are to exert the utmost vigilance therein, and in protecting Minorca and Gibraltar from any hostile attempt." He was also to protect British trade and prey upon that of France, and for these purposes he was to take under his command Edgecombe's squadron, which consisted of one 60-gun ship, two "fifties," and four frigates. Finally, in view of his having established the intended blockade, he was told, "If any ships of war should sail from Toulon and escape your squadron, and proceed out of the Mediterranean, you are forthwith to send or repair yourself to England with a proportionable part of the ships under your command."

The confusing effect which the French strategy inevitably produced is clear. The "supposed intention" to attack Minorca might be a real attack or a feint; if a feint it might be intended to cover either the despatch of reinforcements to America, or a concentration of the Toulon squadron upon Brest to support the threatened invasion of England. It was impossible to tell, and all possibilities had to be provided for. To complete the picture of the strategical confusion produced, it may be noted here that there was an actual intention to cover the passage of reinforcements for Canada, but the movement was masked, not by the Minorca operation, but by the threatened invasion. The first week in April,

Montcalm himself, the new Governor of Canada, with his lieutenants, De Lévis and De Bourlamaque, and his aide-de-camp, Bougainville, the heroes of the coming struggle, gave Hawke the slip and stole out of Brest with a squadron of six of the line and another thousand men.

The only solution of the problem is easy to see. The line of passage from Toulon ought to have been seized earlier by a sufficient battle-fleet based on Port Mahon. On any theory of the war this ought to have been done at the outset. For it was quite as important to prevent France reaching Canada from Toulon as from Brest. But when we try to say how this step could have been taken much earlier, it is not so easy. Owing to the desperate and prolonged efforts which had been made the previous year by Hawke, Boscawen, and Holburne to intercept the French squadrons that had got to sea, the fleet had suffered severely, and even with such a man as Anson at the head of the Admiralty there were limits to the capacities of the dockyards. Indeed, it was only with the greatest difficulty that Byng's squadron could be manned. Still there is little doubt it might have been done if the importance of the movement had been grasped or the value of concentration better understood. "The truth was," as Horace Walpole acutely observed, "the clamours of the merchants, sometimes reasonable, always self-interested, terrified the Duke of Newcastle; and while to prevent their outcries in the city of London he minced the navy of England into cruisers and convoys, every other service was neglected."[1]

The dry figures of the Parliamentary return subsequently called for go far to justify Walpole's trenchant criticism. On January 30th Admiral Osborne sailed with thirteen of the line to escort a convoy southward, and

[1] *Memoirs of George II.*, vol. ii. p. 213.

instead of carrying on to the Mediterranean he returned on February 16th. During March two of the line and three frigates were sent to Cape Barfleur to intercept a coasting convoy; then two more were sent to the West Indies and two more to North America, and yet two more to cruise off Cherbourg. Besides these there were forty-five cruisers in the Narrow Seas, most of them engaged singly in guarding the approaches to minor ports. In the dockyards, either fitting or fitted for sea, were a number more ships of the line and cruisers with their crews idle. It is difficult, therefore, not to believe that a more scientific distribution of the fleet might well have provided a squadron for the Mediterranean in good time, or that Byng's squadron might not have been manned some weeks sooner than it was. As early as January the Duke of Cumberland, it is said, urged that this step should be taken, but his suggestions were always received with jealousy and this one was ignored.

As grave an omission, and one even more inexcusable, was the neglect to place the garrison of Minorca on a war footing so soon as we decided on a policy of reprisal. On February 1st the garrison, which nominally comprised four regiments, numbered only 2860 men, and there were absent on leave no less than thirty-five officers, including the governor, the general, the commandant of Port Mahon citadel, and the colonels of all the four regiments. It was not till February 3rd that an order for their return had been issued, and then it had not been carried out; for, owing probably to the demands for commerce protection, no vessel was even called for to carry them to their posts till March 4th.[1] In the end they had to wait and sail with the fleet.

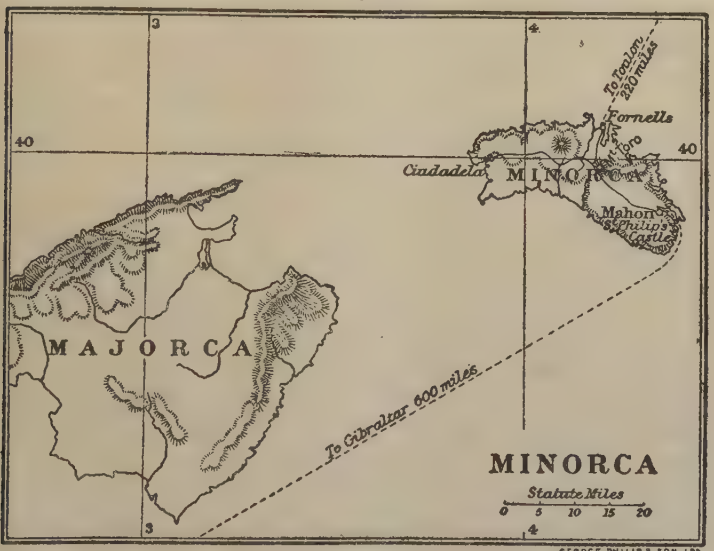
[1] Secretary of State to Lords of Admiralty, *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters*, 4120.

Most ill-advised of all was the selection of such an officer as Byng for the command. He was no man for a doubtful enterprise where so much must turn on a capacity for prompt resolution and fearlessness of responsibility. His previous career stamped him as a nature more alive to the difficulties of a task than resolute to overcome them, a man who met failures half-way, and who, though personally brave, was three parts beaten before he began. Towards the end of the late war he had been second in command in the Mediterranean under Admiral Medley, and after the failure of the Imperialist invasion of Provence he had been intrusted with a detached squadron to prevent the French retaking the Lerins Islands off Cannes which the Imperialists still held. Up to that time this duty had been successfully performed by the restless activity of a certain Captain Wellard with a single cruiser. Byng, however, could see nothing but impossibilities. "I am greatly afraid," he says in his very first despatch to his chief, "they will soon make themselves masters of these islands without having it in my power to prevent them." After doing nothing for ten days he wrote again, "Indeed I cannot flatter myself that I shall have it in my power to prevent them," and a few days later, "In my opinion they may have the opportunity whenever they please without any interruption from our ships for the reasons I have already given you." Indeed his whole mind was absorbed with these same reasons why he could not do what he had been sent to do; and the natural result was that the French, having been allowed since Byng took over the business to carry on their preparations undisturbed, quietly rowed across the first time a squall drove him off and recaptured the islands.[1]

[1] Beatson, *Naval and Military Memoirs*, i. 354; *Lady du Cane's MSS.* (*Hist. MSS. Com.*, 1905), pp. 174 *et seq.*

Still, when Medley died in August 1747, Byng had been allowed to succeed him and to remain in chief command till the peace, so that he was presumed to know the station, and, as his brilliant father's son, to have a kind of vested interest in its command.

Sailing at last on April 6th, it was not till May 2nd that he reached Gibraltar, where the news of what had



happened in the interval brought on immediately an attack of his moral infirmity. Commodore Edgecombe was there to report the French with an army of probably 14,000 men, fully furnished with artillery and stores and escorted by a squadron of unknown strength, were already in possession of Minorca, and were besieging St. Philip's Castle, the citadel of Mahon. On April 18th they had appeared at Ciudadela, a port on the opposite side of the island, and the commodore, after waiting till the last

moment to assist in preparing for the defence of Mahon, landed 250 marines and seamen, and then very properly fell back on Gibraltar to concentrate on Byng. "They sailed from Toulon," wrote Byng, "the 10th of last month with about 160 or 200 sail of transports escorted by thirteen men-of-war; how many of them of the line I have not been able with any certainty to learn. If I had been so happy as to have arrived at Mahon before the French had landed, I flatter myself I would have been able to have prevented them getting a foot on that island; but as it has so unfortunately turned out, I am firmly of opinion, from the great force they have landed, . . . that the throwing men into the castle will only enable it to hold out a little longer time and add to the number that must fall into the enemy's hands. For the garrison in time will be obliged to surrender, unless a sufficient number of men could be landed to dislodge the French or raise the siege." Of the narrowness of this view as to the possibilities that lay open to him we must speak later. "I am afraid," he goes on, "all communication will be cut off between us . . . for if the enemy has erected batteries on the two shores near the entrance of the harbour . . . it will render it impossible for our boats to have a passage to the sally port of the garrison. . . . If I should fail in the relief of Port Mahon, I shall look on the security and protection of Gibraltar as my next object, and shall repair down here with my squadron."

If ever a man "took counsel with his fears" and indulged, as Napoleon used to say, "in making himself pictures," it was Byng at this time. Unfortunately General Fowke, the governor of Gibraltar, was worse, and the two men succeeded in thoroughly demoralising each other, and apparently every one round them. In order to fit Byng's force for the task before him all his marines

had been put ashore at Portsmouth before he sailed, and the Royal Fusiliers embarked in their place. To this landing force was to be added the equivalent of another battalion from the Gibraltar garrison. But so soon as Fowke received the order from Byng he held a council of war, and decided, apparently with Byng's approval, not to obey it, "as it would evidently weaken the garrison of Gibraltar." At the admiral's request, however, he consented to spare enough men to fill up Edgecombe's denuded crews, and so at last, after nearly a week's delay, Byng sailed again on May 8th.

Meanwhile in Minorca things had been going far from well with the French force. Edgecombe had not exaggerated its strength. The army consisted of twenty-five battalions, which, with siege train and engineers, gave an effective force of quite 15,000 men. Its staff, if not the most efficient, was certainly one of the most numerous and brilliant, from a social point of view, that ever left France. At its head was the old Duc de Richelieu, the typical Parisian of his day. A veteran intriguer and roué, he was better known for his success in the drawing-room than in the field, but a great personage enough. Besides his personal staff he had two high-born lieutenant-generals, five equally distinguished "marshals of the field," and no less than a dozen brigadiers. The transports numbered 173, and their escort twelve of the line (including two 50-gun ships), and three frigates. At its head was the Marquis de la Galissonière, probably the most capable officer in the French navy. Born and bred in the service, he was essentially a man of action and of ideas. He was the same aspiring little hunchback who, while governor of Canada at the end of the late war, had conceived the grandiose project of strangling the British Colonies by a line of posts from the

Mississippi to the St. Lawrence—the mainspring of the present troubles. As deeply versed, too, in the scientific as in the practical side of his profession, he had conducted instructional manœuvres in the Mediterranean in the last two years, during which he had thoroughly trained his officers and crews in tactical exercises, and had familiarised them with a new system of signalling. For his success in this work he had just been made "Lieutenant-general des armées navales de sa majesté," the highest grade in the French sea service.[1]

Such were the two men with whom poor Byng had to deal. "Together," says a recent French historian, "they give us the most perfect image of this incomparable age. Richelieu represents its airy grace, its impudent gallantry, its unscrupulous intrigue, all its defects and extravagances, with the two qualities for which our country forgives everything—courage and wit. La Galissonière represents, like the Marquis of Montcalm in Canada, the vigorous uprightness, the moral rectitude, the absolute devotion to duty, all those exalted military virtues of old France, which should be the example of France to-day."[2]

The orders which Galissonière received are well worth consideration. The object "with which he was perpetually to occupy himself" was "the preservation of the forces which his Majesty destines for this expedition. It is to this object that his Majesty wishes him to direct all his plans, whether before his sailing from Toulon or on the voyage to Minorca, or for such time as he may remain on the coasts or in the ports of that island. Every consideration must give place to this. . . . His

[1] Lacour-Gayet, *La Marine Militaire sous Louis XV.*, p. 255.

[2] E. Guillon, *Port Mahon, La France à Minorque sous Louis XV.* Cited by Lacour-Gayet, *ubi supra.*

Majesty even desires that in all his arrangements he will make a point of considering whether or not it is right to attack the English men-of-war or merchants he may fall in with either at sea or in the ports of the island of Minorca, for if the pursuit of such ships will occasion delays that may hazard the squadron or the troops of his Majesty, he orders him to abstain from it."[1] The latest French critic disparages these orders as being "conceived in the spirit of timidity which at that epoch was the characteristic of the policy imposed upon our navy"; and most English writers have taken the same view. But this is scarcely justice. The matter is not so simple. The function of Galissonière's squadron in this case was purely defensive—to cover the striking force by holding its line of passage and communication; and it would have been going beyond its true strategic function to attack any force which did not threaten that line. Moreover, the whole operation was conceived as one over an uncommanded sea to be carried out by evasion before the enemy could assert his superiority. Rapidity in the advance, in delivering the blow, and in retreat is of the essence of such operations. Newcastle had in his pocket at this moment two despatches of Bunge's which make this quite clear. Writing on April 2nd, the Swedish Minister told his government that the preparations against Minorca would soon be complete, and carried out immediately if circumstances permitted, but that they depended on a fair wind and upon the news Richelieu got of the English squadron. And again, on the 9th: "The inattention of the English to cover that island in time is the chief motive . . . for attacking it immediately without waiting for the great expedition against England." At this time too, it must

[1] Waddington, *Louis XV. et le Renversement des Alliances*, p. 440.

be remembered, Richelieu was under orders to strike his blow, destroy Mahon as a naval station, and come away at once.[1] There was as yet no definite intention of holding the place, and therefore no special reason for attempting to command the sea. If ever there was an occasion for a naval defensive it was this one. Galissonière's orders in their general tenor were absolutely correct. A defensive attitude was very properly enjoined upon him, but where his orders went wrong was that, at least to some extent, they certainly fettered his discretion in using attack as a method of defence. Subsequently, when complaint was made of his having suffered Edgecombe's squadron to escape out of Mahon, he defended himself completely by appealing to his instructions. "I find therein," he wrote, "(1) that I am to protect the landing with the line-of-battle ships and the frigates of the fleet; (2) that I am not to quit the landing-place . . . till I hear the troops are ready to attack the town of Mahon and the forts that defend it; (3) that I am not to divide the line-of-battle ships, &c."[2] He was thus tied to the landing-place absolutely with his whole fleet till the landing and the investment of Mahon were complete. This was certainly wrong. To tell him to act defensively, to cover the landing and the siege, was right, but full liberty both of minor strategy and tactics should have been left to him, that he might decide whether his main function could be best discharged by an active or a passive defence.

It was not that the French strategy was incorrect in its main lines. Their only real error was in miscalculating the possibility of delivering their *coup de*

[1] Bunge to Höpken, April 2 and 9 (received April 18 and 25), *Add. MSS.* 32,864; Waddington, *op. cit.*, p. 441.
[2] E. Guillon, *Port Mahon*, p. 43.

main before a British fleet could appear upon the scene. Though their landing at Ciudadela and their advance upon Mahon were unopposed, it was not till five days had passed that Richelieu was able to occupy the town, and so great were the difficulties of transport that another fortnight was lost before he was able to commence the siege of the citadel. It was on May 8th, the very day Byng weighed from Gibraltar, that his mortar batteries opened. On the morrow the approaches were begun, but everywhere was found hard rock. Trenching was almost impossible. The British fire was found unexpectedly galling, and serious loss was being suffered with scarcely any progress made. He had already begun to press to have his siege train reinforced, when on the evening of May 17th Galissonière's frigates reported that Byng had been sighted off Majorca.

No force could well be in a worse plight than Richelieu's. The surprise had failed. The capture of the citadel looked as far off as ever, and so long as the British fleet stayed where it was, Richelieu could neither let go nor get the supplies he required for success.

What then should Byng have done? He found himself opposed to a fleet of equal strength. Ought he to attack it? The tradition, the prestige of the British navy permitted of but one answer, but it was not the answer sagacious strategy would have given. To attack was simply to play into Galissonière's hands; but Byng was not like his opponent, a man of ideas. For every reason attack was wrong. Tactically it was wrong, because in those days of line to line attacks the defender had an immense advantage. Consequently, with equal fleets the best tactics were those which forced your enemy to attack you. Strategically it was wrong, because the

French fleet was not his objective. Byng's true objective was Richelieu's army. Strictly, it was Byng's business to operate against Richelieu, and Galissonière's business to prevent it by offensive action against him, which would have given the British all the tactical advantages of the defence. There were many ways in which Byng could have forced Galissonière's hand by movements which threatened Richelieu's position, but these were refinements which no British officer in those days would have thought of considering. The enemy's fleet was before him, and he had to attack.

To realise Byng's position we must remember that he felt himself face to face with a situation which the government had never contemplated. The small diversion which it had been his mission to stop was a fully developed eccentric attack, and he regarded the relief of Mahon as out of the question. With this conviction he had left Gibraltar. "Every person there," he said in his defence, "concluded the place lost, and all relief impracticable." He sent ahead a frigate to endeavour to communicate a letter to Blakeney, in which he informed him he had the Fusiliers serving in lieu of marines on board the fleet. If necessary, he said, they could be landed, "but," he added, "I must also inform you that should the Fusiliers be landed . . . it will disable the squadron from acting against that of the enemy." It was a real dilemma, for which the government and not Byng is to be blamed. The letter was never delivered. As the advanced frigate was endeavouring to attract the attention of the garrison, the French fleet appeared, and she was recalled. Having landed the troops at Ciudadela and the guns and stores at Fornells, Galissonière had brought his squadron round to blockade Mahon. It was more than enough to clear the British

admiral's conscience about landing the Fusiliers, and deciding at once to engage, he made the signal for general chase. Shortly afterwards, seeing the French were standing towards him to accept action, he signalled for the line of battle ahead. The wind, however, dropped before the line could be formed, and continued so light all day that no action could take place.

The next morning broke with mist, and nothing could be seen but a few local craft. The nearest ships were ordered to chase, and one was captured. She proved to be full of troops from Richelieu's army, part of a large detachment that had been sent out to reinforce Galissonière's crews for the expected action. In order to keep in touch with his chasing ships, Byng had tacked inshore, and was now standing about north-west towards Mahon on a south-west wind. About seven o'clock, as the mist began to thin, a fleet was reported about twelve miles away in the south-east quarter. Cruisers were at once recalled, but for another hour Byng held on as he was. By ten the chasing ships had nearly rejoined, and Byng signalled to tack south-east towards the enemy. Then followed the signal for the line of battle ahead at two cables, and to bring-to for the sternmost vessels to get into station. Shortly after eleven the formation was complete, the fleet filled away on a south-south-west wind, and the intervals were closed up to half a cable. It could now be seen that the French too were standing on in line of battle, hugging the wind at about west-north-west and crowding sail. Byng promptly did the like, and so began an exciting race as to which could cross the other's course first, and so gain the weather station.

Byng's fleet now consisted of thirteen of the line, including two fifties, and was formed in two divisions, seven in the van under himself, and six in the rear

under Rear-Admiral Temple West, each flag-officer taking station in the centre of his division. Galissonière had twelve, also including two fifties, but the metal he could throw was distinctly superior to Byng's, and his ships were cleaner, faster, and more fully manned. His organisation was in the orthodox three divisions, himself commanding the centre.[1]

For over an hour the struggle for the weather gauge went on, and no one could tell how it would end. By half-past twelve the critical moment had come, and then suddenly the wind shifted to about south-west in

[1] It is noteworthy as an indication of Byng's tactical originality that Galissonière censured him for adopting an order of battle which gave no flagship in the centre. "L'avantage du vent," he says, "a permis aux Anglais de commettre ces irregularités sans risque, et notre position demandait que nous fussions serrés comme nous l'avons été." He also says that for some moments the English centre was open (*vide*). This looks as if he had the idea of breaking the line in his mind, and as though the necessity of keeping his own line closed up prevented his taking advantage of the opportunity (Chasseriau, *Précis de la Marine*, i. 154). It is also significant of a sense of the danger Byng felt he had run that the day after the battle he contemplated reorganising his fleet in three divisions. "We talked," says Temple West in his evidence, "upon the subject of new forming the line, in which conversation, among other dispositions of the line, it was mentioned to form it in three divisions. The admiral said he did not know whom to trust with the third division."

Byng's line of battle in the action was as follows:—

	Kingston	60	Capt. Parry		
	Deptford	48	,, Amherst		
	Culloden	74	,, Ward		
Phœnix (to repeat)	*Ramilies*	90	Adm. Byng / Capt. Gardiner		Van.
	Trident	64	,, Durell		
	Princess Louisa	56	,, Noel		
	Revenge	64	,, Cornewall		
	Intrepid	64	,, Young		
	Captain	64	,, Catford		
Dolphin (to repeat)	*Buckingham*	68	,, Temple West / ,, Everitt		Rear.
	Lancaster	66	,, Edgecombe		
	Portland	48	,, Baird		
	Defiance	60	,, Andrews		

Dated May 3, 1756.

Byng's favour. It was no longer possible for Galissonière to weather the British with his whole fleet. He was forced to give way, and, shortening sail, he signalled to his van to bear up, "otherwise," says Byng, "they would have run the risk of being separated, and their line cut by our line."

This remark, like so many other things in this much-ridiculed action, is full of interest. Few actions have been so much misconceived in their tactical significance as that which was about to ensue. It has been studied almost entirely to see whether Byng did or did not deserve his hard fate, and the unhappy admiral has been stamped as an unfortunate bungler hide-bound in the stereotyped "Fighting Instructions," and without a spark of tactical initiative. That he was a man devoid of the character that makes a great commander is certain, but the idea that he was not a scientific tactician fully in touch with the developments of his time is as certainly an error. The injustice done to him in this way is no doubt due to the belief that naval tactics at this time were stagnant, and Byng has been used to personify that stagnation. But we have only to examine the battle closely with the new lights that are available to see that tactics were developing on normal and continuous lines of progression, and that Byng himself was in the forefront of the movement.

To begin with, his remark about cutting the French line shows that the idea had not been forgotten, as is always asserted, and it would look as though Byng had been ready to perform the manœuvre if his adversary had given him a fair chance. Later on Galissonière, in his turn, did get such a chance. He attempted the manœuvre, and it was parried by a movement of Byng's. The truth is that the ordinary idea of breaking the line was still

quite familiar to naval officers, but it had come to be regarded as too hazardous a movement for the early stages of an action. "Doubling" on rear or van was in greater favour as a method of concentration, and especially with the French; and it was to prevent this being done that admirals at this time attached so much importance to opening with a rigid line extending the whole length of the enemy's. It was not that no other method of attack—such as by general chase—was regarded as legitimate in its place. But between equal fleets equally determined, no other was considered in place. "Do you not apprehend," asked Byng at his trial in examining Captain Gardiner, his flag-captain, "that a line of battle is the strongest offensive and defensive form that ships can be ranged in to mutually assist and support each other?" "I do," answered Gardiner. "And when," Byng went on, "an enemy's fleet of superior, equal, or nearly equal force is ranged in a line of battle, do not you apprehend it imprudent, contrary to discipline, and dangerous to attack them in any other form than that of a line of battle." But Gardiner declined to answer, as it was a question of opinion and not of fact. Still the question shows that Byng had a reasoned scientific basis for the faith that was in him. In his eyes the rigid line was the key to mutual support, and to accuse him and his school of regarding a battle as a mere series of single ship actions is to misjudge and misread the history of tactics.

Nor is this all. For in judging Byng as a tactician, and before we brand him as a man bound hand and foot with the pedantry of old Fighting Instructions, we must not forget that it was to this fleet, and by Byng himself, that was issued—so far as is known—the first regular

set of Additional Fighting Instructions.[1] It was by these sets of additional instructions that life and flexibility were given to tactical development. No copy that can be identified as that issued by Byng has come down to us. Their general character will appear from the free use he made of them during the action. Lastly, we have the fact that in making his attack Byng, instead of adhering pedantically to the stereotyped method of the old Instructions, did attempt a modification of considerable merit. His captains mistook his meaning, or the result might have been very different. Hawke, who is always held up as the model of progress in contrast to Byng, certainly approved of the idea, and one of his first acts on superseding Byng was to adopt the new form of attack in an Additional Instruction of his own.[2] With these facts in mind, Byng's action may be approached with some possibility of right judgment.

For a while the sudden shift of the wind threw the French line into confusion. Some at least of the British officers expected to see Byng seize the moment to bear down and attack.[3] But he was no man for such a sudden change of plan, and when the French van bore up, Byng, having secured his advantage, merely eased off a little, and held on in line-ahead, leaving the enemy to re-form in peace on the port tack. The effect of the two movements was that the opposing lines were not quite parallel, as they ran abreast of each other on opposite tacks. Except for this all was perfectly orthodox. According to Article XVII. of the Fighting

[1] It is, of course, probable that these Additional Instructions were drawn up by Anson, and supplied to Hawke and all the other admirals employed this year, but no copy of them has yet come to light.

[2] *Fighting Instructions* (*Navy Record Society*), p. 217.

[3] Evidence of Richard Higgs, Lieutenant of the *Buckingham* (*Trial of Admiral John Byng*, Dublin, 1757, p. 57).

Instructions Byng ought to hold on till his van came abreast of the enemy's rear, and then go about together, beginning from the rear so as to get into proper position for going down to engage.[1] But here came his modification; for instead of going about at the regular moment he still held on, stretching his van beyond the enemy's rear. His secretary tells us exactly why. "I very well remember," he said at the court-martial, "when our van had got the length of the enemy's rear I saw the Admiral peruse the Seventeenth Article of the Fighting Instructions. I took the liberty of observing to the Admiral that, agreeable to the article, the fleet should tack. The Admiral answered me that he would stand rather beyond their rear before he tacked, as it would give an opportunity to every ship to lead slanting down on the one she was to engage, and they would not be so liable to be raked by the enemy's shot." [2]

This was the well-known defect of the regular method of attack. By getting abreast of her opposite number, and then bearing directly down to engage, every ship got raked with impunity, for none of her broadside guns would bear to reply. Byng's idea was to avoid this by going down "lasking" or "angling," with the wind just abaft the beam on a diagonal course, so that his broadsides would bear all the time. The idea was not original. It had appeared as an addition to the corresponding article of the Duke of York's instructions made by Lord

[1] "If the admiral see the enemy standing towards him, and he has the wind of them, the van of the fleet is to make sail till they come the length of the enemy's rear, and our rear abreast the enemy's van: then he that is in the rear of our fleet is to tack first, and every ship one after another as fast as they can throughout the line. And if the admiral would have the whole fleet tack together, the sooner to put them in a posture of engaging the enemy, then he will hoist the Union flag on the flagstaff at the fore and mizzen mast-heads and fire a gun."

[2] Evidence of George Laurence, Jan. 19, 1756.

Dartmouth in 1688, and it is quite possible Byng had received it as a tradition from his father, Lord Torrington.[1]

By half-past one Byng was satisfied he had reached far enough for every ship to run down for her opposite number in the enemy's line with her broadside bearing, and he signalled to go about, the rearmost ship to begin. As the British ships backed their topsails Galissonière thought he detected a trick to concentrate upon his rear, and he too threw all aback to parry it.[2] The effect of Galissonière's thus suddenly stopping his way was somewhat to spoil the British plan by keeping the two fleets more nearly abreast of each other than Byng intended. But Byng was equal to the occasion, and hurried on his own manœuvre by signalling to tack all together. So soon as the fleet was formed on the new tack he expected to see his rearmost ship, the *Defiance*, which was now leading, bear up immediately to engage the leading ship of the French. This he believed to be the recognised thing to do under Article XIX.: "If the Admiral and his

[1] *Fighting Instructions* (*Navy Record Society*), p. 171. Dartmouth's addition ends: "and at last only to lask away when they came near within shot towards the enemy as much as may be, and not bringing their heads to bear against the enemy's broadsides."

There is evidence, moreover, in the mass of controversial literature which Byng's trial produced, that the principle of bearing down directly was not universally accepted in the navy. One writer, who described himself as a naval officer of forty years' standing, says, "How concurrent such a conduct may be to any new system of our modern disciplinarians (*i.e.* tacticians) I will not pretend to say: but certain I am it is contrary to the doctrine as well as the practice of every prudent, good, or great officer I ever knew or heard of." See *A Candid Examination of the Court-Martial of Admiral Byng, in a letter to the gentlemen of the Navy*, by "An old sea officer," p. 14, and *An exact copy of a letter from Admiral Byng to the Right Hon. W—— P——, Esq.*, p. 15.

The glossary attached to the Dublin edition of the *Trial* (appendix, p. 79) has this explanation of "lasking": "When she neither goes by a wind nor before a wind, but betwixt both: then they make use of some of the following terms which are all of one signification, viz. *The ship goes Lasking, Quartering, Veering, or Large.*"

[2] Troude, *Batailles Navales de France*, vol. i. p. 333.

fleet have the wind of the enemy, and they have stretched themselves in a line of battle, the van of the Admiral's fleet is to steer with the van of the enemy's and there to engage them." In vain he looked to see the movement begin. The *Defiance* held on as she was, rapidly spoiling the disposition he had made. Growing more and more impatient he called to his secretary "to look in the General Signals to see if there was any signal to direct her to head down upon the enemy. . . . But finding there was no signal for that purpose he recollected that the Fifth Article of the Additional Fighting Instructions directed the leading ship to lead to starboard, which, he said, would answer the purpose he intended, and accordingly ordered that signal to be made, and one gun to be fired for heading one point to starboard, saying, he could not take upon him to direct the precise number of points she should bear away, as it was impossible for him to judge how the enemy's leading ship bore of the *Defiance*."[1] The *Defiance*, however, still not seeing the admiral's intention, obeyed the signal literally, whereupon Captain Hervey of the *Phœnix* repeating frigate, repeated the signal with another gun, in accordance with one of the new Additional Instructions.[2] Still it had little effect. It was interpreted merely as a direction to bear away one point more. The effect of the signal—so Byng's flag-captain informed the Court—was to bring the fleet into line of bearing, or as he put it, "they were upon the bow and quarter of each other." This was the formation Byng intended, but still the fleet was not bearing away sufficiently. Byng's chance was fast slipping away, he

[1] Evidence of Mr. George Laurence. The Instruction is the same as No. XV. on p. 223 of *Fighting Instructions* (*Navy Record Society*).

[2] See *Byng's Defence*. He gives the words of the Instruction thus: "If the Captains of the Frigates which are appointed to repeat signals find the signal not observed they are to fire guns until it is taken notice of."

grew more and more impatient, and saw something must be done. "It appeared to me," he says in his defence, "that the leading ship did not yet steer down sufficiently, and by that means was drawing the van abreast of the enemy's van, and altering the disposition which I had made for attacking the enemy by steering down a slanting course to avoid being raked. I therefore thought it necessary to make the signal to engage to bring on the action, and to empower the ships to fire respectively as they got within a proper distance."[1] It was a pity he had not thought of this before, for the effect was instantaneous. The whole of the leading division, which by this time was practically abreast of the enemy's van, bore away directly each for her opposite number, and engaged them furiously at point-blank range. This they were able to do, since, when the signal was made, the headmost ships were less than a quarter of a mile from the enemy, and in about half-an-hour Temple West, with the signal for closer action[2] flying, had driven "the ship opposed to him in the line" to leeward, and in an hour more the whole van of the enemy had been forced to run to leeward. So hard, indeed, did Temple West press his advantage that he found himself threatened with a new danger.

In Byng's division things had not gone so well. When he made the signal to engage, so Captain Gardiner says, the enemy's centre bore right ahead of the flagship about two miles away. He was consequently much longer in getting into action than Temple West, and, still intent on

[1] Article XIII. of the Old Fighting Instructions. Signal, "a red flag on the flagstaff at the fore-topmast head." Ten minutes later he made a signal to his thirteenth and smallest ship, the *Deptford* (48), to leave the line, under the new rule for equalising the line with that of the enemy. (Article I., Additional, of 1759; see *Fighting Instructions* (*Navy Record Society*), p. 219.)

[2] Red and white flag at main topmast head, an instruction originally introduced by Vernon. *Ibid.*, pp. 215, 219.

carrying out his design, he increased the delay by continuing his attempt to go lasking down with his lee broadside bearing. It was half-an-hour before he was near enough to open fire, and scarcely had he begun when he suddenly perceived through the dense clouds of smoke that two ships had brought-to ahead of him. Something was wrong, and to avoid a collision he had to signal for all ships to brace-to. What had happened was this. Captain Young, in the *Intrepid*, being the last ship in Temple West's division, had borne away direct for the enemy, as he had seen his chief do. This he did apparently without any shadow of doubt, being convinced, as was explained at the trial, that from the relative position the fleets had got into, it was the only possible way of bringing on an action. He had no idea but to lay himself alongside his opposite number as speedily as possible. "I took no notice," he says, "of any signals after the signal for battle was out." Unfortunately, the inherent defect of this direct method of attack declared itself in his case only too quickly. Being the furthest ship of his division from the enemy, he was longest exposed to the raking, and before he could close, his fore-topmast went and his ship became unmanageable. The result was that he fell athwart the slanting course which Byng was still steering, and brought the whole of the admiral's division to a standstill in confusion. Then as Temple West continued to press the enemy's van, a wide gap opened between the two British divisions and he began to fall to leeward of the disengaged French centre. Galissonière saw his chance. Hitherto he had been lying-to. Now he signalled to fill away and cut the British line. His intention was to pass his centre and rear through the widening gap, and by hugging the wind to double on Temple West. It was a

fine movement, but it was too late. Before it had developed Byng had got his division clear, and passing by the *Intrepid*, pressed on to close up his line. The French movement was smartly countered, and Galissonière, forced to give way, bore up to leeward to reform his line. So about half-past five the action ceased and was not renewed.

In Byng's view it was impossible to do so, since the enemy, as a fleet, was faster and apparently was making off. "There appeared to me," he said in his defence, "no further possibility of bringing the enemy to action again, as they declined it, without I had a sufficient force and superiority to enable me to make the general signal to chase." The remark is interesting. No objection seems to have been taken to it, and it would show that an attack by general chase, so far from being an invention or revival of Hawke's, as is usually assumed, was a commonplace of the service, but that it was not considered legitimate against a fleet that was your equal in force and spirit. During the action, as the French van gave way, Byng actually regretted to his flag-captain that he had not a few more ships so as to justify him in making the signal. Under the circumstances, however, he considered it his duty to cover his crippled ships till they had repaired damages.[1]

[1] I have not ventured to give a plan of the action, because on the information available I have found it impossible to plot the courses of the fleets with certainty. It is hoped that the general character of the battle will be plain from the above description. For those who would attempt to plot, the following extract from the master's log of the *Ramillies* is given :—

Time	7–8	8–9	9–10	10–11	11–12	12–1	1–2	2–3	3–4
Course . . .	W. by N.	W.	W. by S.	SE. off.	SE.	SSE. by E.	do.	N.	NW.
Wind	SW. by S.	SSW.	S. by W.	ESE.	SSW.	SW.	do.	do.	WSW.
Speed	2	...	2	up	3	3	2	2	1 to 3

The *Remarks* are as follows: "At 9.0 saw French fleet SE. by E. 4 leagues; called in cruisers. Made sail at 10.0 to SE. Soon after made

In justice to Byng it must be remembered that, although he hung about the scene of the action for two days, the French made no attempt to renew it. On the third afternoon they were sighted, but as the crippled ships had not completed their repairs, Byng decided to stand away for the night. Temple West was consulted as to making a fresh attack, but he would only reply that he was ready to give his opinion in council of war. So far, then, although Byng had shown no brilliant or determined leadership, there was nothing in his conduct to deserve severe censure. It was in what followed that he ruined his reputation.

It was on May 24th, four days after the action, that the council of war met. No report of the proceedings exists. Only the questions that were put have come down to us, but they show too well that ever since the two fleets had separated, Byng had been busy again "making himself pictures," till he had scared out of him the last traces of strategical spirit, and had made up his mind to failure and retreat. The first question struck the false note—"Whether an attack upon the French fleet gives any prospect of relieving Minorca?" The inevitable and unanimous answer was that it would not, and so the leading questions were presented one after the other in such a way that but one conclusion was possible.[1] They

signal for line-ahead 2 cables, and brought-to for sternmost ships to form the line. 11.30, signal for ½ cable distance and van to fill and stand on. 1.0, little wind. At ½ past signal for rear to tack and directly after for whole fleet to tack together. The van to lead to starboard. 2.30, signal to engage. Soon after enemy began to fire. About 3.0 we began, and same time saw *Intrepid's* fore-topmast shot away."

Positions. Midnight before action. "C. Mola NNW. 4 leagues, tacked and stood SSE. till 5.0, when tacked to westward." Noon. "Mount Toro N. by 40 W., 9 leagues. Lat., 39–34."

[1] This was Lord St. Vincent's view of Byng's intention. See his despatch to the Viceroy of Corsica, April 11, 1796:—"Poor Admiral Mann has for the present frustrated my plan of operations by a resolution

were as follows: "Whether, if there were no French fleet cruising off Minorca, the English fleet could raise the siege?" Answer—It could not. "Whether Gibraltar would not be in danger by any accident that might befall this fleet?" Answer—It would. The fourth was whether an attack with our fleet in its present state would not endanger Gibraltar and the Mediterranean trade. The answer was that it would. Lastly, "Whether it is not most for his Majesty's service that the fleet should immediately proceed for Gibraltar?" and again the unanimous answer was Yes! It was obviously the conclusion Byng intended to reach, and probably the one with which he had honestly argued himself.

But his line of reasoning was false from the beginning. He approached the question with no scientific conception of how to state it to himself or his council of war. The result was that he misstated his object, his objective, and the nature of his force. His object, as he saw it, was to raise the siege of Mahon, and he could see no way of raising sieges except by attacking the investing army with a sufficient land force. This he had not got, and therefore it was no good doing anything. But if he had only grasped the problem in the terms of the functions of a fleet, he could hardly have made so grave a mistake. Theoretically conceived, the function of his fleet, under the instructions he had received, was to hinder certain military operations in the island of Minorca. Consequently his true objective was Richelieu's army, not Galissonière's fleet. Galissonière's fleet was merely an obstacle, and it might possibly be turned if it could

taken in concert with the captains under his orders. . . . His reasons are those of a man who has lost all his power, and, I conclude, the queries he put to the captains were so formed as to point their answers, which happened on a former occasion (Byng's)."—Brenton, *Life of St. Vincent*, vol. i. pp. 261–2.

not be removed. He had tried to remove it and had failed, and in his confused way of thinking he could see nothing beyond. But supposing he had asked himself this: How can I strike at my objective—the French army—how can I hinder its operations with the combined force at my disposal? Then the true solution must have occurred to him. He must have said to himself: "Direct attack is impossible, but operations upon their communications and by diversions are both open to me."

The estrangement which then existed between the two services made it impossible for Byng to understand the moral disturbance which such operations would bring to an army practically in the air. Having no experience of military matters, he could not tell, though the staff and field officers whom he had on board and who had been called to his council of war might have told him, how nervous a besieging army is of its line of supply and retreat, how disconcerted it becomes when that line is even threatened. All this was open to him, and Galissonière could not have stopped the game except by a decisive victory. Merely to sit on the French communications with Toulon would have been to prevent the despatch of the reinforcements which Richelieu was awaiting; but much more than that was possible. In Ciudadela and Fornells, on the opposite side of the island, lay a crowd of helpless transports and store-ships, and any threat upon them must have forced Richelieu to detach a large part of his army to protect them. If Galissonière came round to interfere, Mahon would be open, and the sorely-needed officers and some at least of the troops could have been landed. At various points in rear of the siege-works there were places where landings could have been threatened continually, and thus

Richelieu's army would have been kept in a condition of exasperating unrest that would quickly demoralise it and expose it to punishment by sortie. All that was required was that Byng should act rigidly on the defensive in regard to Galissonière's fleet. It was the last thing a British admiral would ever think of doing, but here it was strictly correct. For it would only have been adopted temporarily until the arrival of reinforcements should permit Byng to pass to the offensive. Then he could have seized absolute control of the sea communications, and Richelieu and all his army would have been lost to France.

We have only to turn to the condition of the French forces to see how drastically such a plan of operation would have acted. When it was known in Richelieu's camp that Byng had disappeared, it could hardly be believed. The only explanation was that he had gone to meet reinforcements, and that their fate was sealed. Handsomely as Richelieu received his admiral after the action, the staff could not conceal from themselves that the whole affair was "un événement plus brillant que solide." "Gentlemen," Richelieu had said to his staff as he watched the action through his glass, "they are playing out there a very interesting game. If M. de la Galissonière beats the enemy, we may continue the siege in our slippers." But M. de la Galissonière had not beaten the enemy, and even without any interruption from Byng the siege did not go on in slippers. The rock made the siege-works laborious in the extreme, and little progress had been made. "They begin to look rather black at headquarters," wrote Maillebois, one of the generals, to the Minister two days after the action. A week later he reported they were no more advanced after three weeks than they had been after four

days. Galissonière was calling for reinforcements, and none were to be had. "Naval officers here," wrote the Toulon commissioner to his chief in Paris, "hold that there is no doubt that the English will come back in superior force. M. de la Galissonière can do nothing but give way to numbers so as to prevent the annihilation of our Mediterranean fleet."[1] Between June 2nd and 14th the French lost 200 men in killed and wounded, and 500 more were down with dysentery. A month had gone by since Richelieu first asked for reinforcements, and it was not till five more battalions had reached him that he felt himself justified in attempting the desperate expedient of an assault.

It is obvious, therefore, that Byng had only to hold his ground till reinforcements could reach him, and he must have practically paralysed the siege. It required but a well-played game of hide-and-seek, and in this Byng, with his familiarity with the scene of action, should have been his adversary's equal. But all this chance he threw away from sheer lack of spirit and imagination. In those days there was no chance for an officer like Byng to supply his deficiencies by a sound training in strategy. Genius was wanting, and he had nothing else. For the average British admiral of that time there was nothing between attack and retreat. Their besetting strategical sin was failure to appreciate the power that lies in a well-applied defensive. Its value and the conditions of its use will suggest themselves like every other expedient to a great strategical instinct, but failing such natural instinct they will never be understood without patient study of theoretical principle. In Byng both instinct and study were wanting.

The first week in May the Government at home had

[1] Waddington, *Renversement des Alliances*, pp. 451–2.

received overland from Captain the Hon. Augustus Hervey, one of Edgecombe's frigate captains, who was to prove himself one of the most vigilant and resourceful officers of the war, fresh details of Richelieu's force. At the same time came news of his landing in Minorca. The Cabinet immediately resolved to declare war, and to hurry off four of the line to Byng under Admiral Brodrick.[1] By the end of the month the despatches which Byng had written from Gibraltar came to hand. "I think," wrote Anson to Newcastle, "you won't be much pleased with his letter, and less with the Governor of Gibraltar's, who has sent no troops for the relief of Port Mahon, and for a most extraordinary reason, viz. because then he would have fewer at Gibraltar." [2] The more these despatches were read the less they pleased, and it was quickly decided to supersede every one concerned. Hawke, who had been cruising off the Bay while Boscawen blockaded Brest, had just come in with eight or nine rich prizes from a West India convoy, and was ordered to replace Byng, but Anson had little hope of his saving the situation. "If Galissonière," he wrote, "is returned to Port Mahon, and Byng returned to Gibraltar, it must be lost, and grievous it will be to this nation." [3] He was sending Hawke's draft instructions to the Prime Minister for comment. There had been a talk of the new admiral's being ordered to seize Corsica as a set-off against Minorca, but Anson would not take the responsibility. It was in his opinion even more than the Secret Committee should decide. "There must be a resolution," he said, "of all the King's servants"—that

[1] *Newcastle Papers, Add. MSS.* 32,864; and 32,996 (*Cabinet Memoranda*), ff. 419, 423.
[2] *Ibid.*, 32,865, May 31.
[3] Anson to Newcastle, June 5, *ibid.*

is, of the whole Cabinet. Newcastle would not commit himself either, but he suggested Hawke should be impressed with the particular duty of destroying the French fleet, "which I fear," he added, "is what Admiral Byng has not given sufficient attention to." If Mahon fell he was for retaking it. "Some say," he wrote, "if we are superior at sea, the French can't subsist long in the island, and this is the language I would hold, and if Minorca is not gone that language would be the likeliest to preserve it." All excellent strategy, if he had only grasped it soon enough to put Byng in sufficient force to carry it out.

With Hawke was to go the best material to be had, that no chance might be missed of retrieving the situation. Looking for a man to be Hawke's second and to supersede Temple West, Anson pitched on Captain Charles Saunders. Of all the brilliant band who had accompanied him in the *Centurion* on his famous voyage round the world, Saunders was the man of whom he had the highest opinion, and well was he to prove, as the war went on, the justice of his old chief's judgment. Already in the last war he had highly distinguished himself in Hawke's victory over L'Etanduère. He had just been made Controller of the Navy, and now, by a special promotion of all his seniors on the captains list, he was lifted to flag rank. For Gibraltar was chosen the absentee Governor of Minorca. This was James O'Hara, Lord Tyrawly, a veteran of Marlborough's wars, and equally famous as a diplomat and politician, whose capacity every one acknowledged, and whose caustic humour every one was afraid of. Such was the "little cargo of courage," as the wits called it, that on June 16th sailed to make the best of a desperate situation, and the last news they had was

from the Spanish ambassador of the difficulties Richelieu was in.[1]

Meanwhile Brodrick, with the original reinforcement, had reached Gibraltar the day before. It was not till three days later, the 19th, that Byng appeared. Finding his reinforcements, he gave up all idea of merely protecting Gibraltar, and set about getting his fleet ready to return to Minorca. But he had a thousand sick to land, and much repair to do, and on July 4th, before his preparations were complete, Hawke arrived to supersede him. Crushed with the wholly unexpected blow, Byng sailed for England on the 9th, and on the morrow Hawke carried out the fleet on its forlorn hope. Another week had gone in refitting, and even then the shattered *Intrepid* was not ready. Hawke had no intention of going without her. Of all men of that time, Hawke is held to be the personification of dash, of readiness for daring risk, of impatience of formalism in war. Yet at that high crisis, when every hour was precious, four whole days were spent "in exercising the fleet in lines of battle." On the 14th the *Intrepid* joined, and not till then did he push for Minorca.[2] In deriding Byng for his formalism and tactical bigotry, this fact should not be forgotten. For it shows that under like conditions, that is, in presence of an equal fleet, the prophet of informality could be, and was, as formal and as careful as Byng himself.

As it happened, those four precious days spent in tactical exercises were not lost; for in Minorca the crisis had already come some weeks before. Richelieu had heard that Brodrick had started, and he knew there was not a moment to lose. The time for "slippers" had gone by, his own reinforcements had arrived, and he

[1] *Newcastle Papers, Add. MSS.* 32,865, June 8, Anson to Newcastle.
[2] Hawke's Journal, *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters*, 90.

determined to hazard all on a desperate assault. On the night of June 27th it was delivered. The result was a complete surprise. By morning all the principal outworks had fallen; the citadel was no longer tenable; and on the morrow Blakeney brought his fine defence to an end with a capitulation which gave the garrison their liberty and all the honours of war. Still Richelieu was far from safe. The return of his army to France remained the most dangerous part of the whole operation. Yet within a week of the capitulation it was done. The whole of the army did not return, for although at first it had been urged very plausibly that the proper strategy for France was to destroy Mahon and abandon the island, the idea had been given up. Galissonière had reported that to destroy the port would cost over a million, while Richelieu, apart from the difficulty of rendering the place useless, strongly urged its retention on political grounds. Public sentiment, moreover, was entirely on his side, and he was authorised to make the occupation permanent.[1] Eleven battalions were accordingly left as a garrison, and with the rest, on July 5th, Richelieu set sail while Hawke was yet at his moorings in Gibraltar Bay. On the 15th, as the new British admiral, having completed his battle exercises, was crowding all sail for Mahon, he met, off Almeria, a fleet of French transports, and in them was the Minorca garrison on its way to Gibraltar. From them he learnt that all was over. It was not till the 20th that he reached the island, and four days earlier Richelieu had made his triumphant entry into Toulon.

So the French reaped the reward of their well-played game, while in England arose an outburst of exasperation

[1] "Sentiments de M. le Maréchal de Richelieu sur le projet de combler le port de Mahon," &c. Cited by Dr. E. Guillon, *Port Mahon*, p. 66.

that frightened Newcastle and his friends into an activity as disgraceful as their former neglect. The moment the Prime Minister heard of it he wrote off to his crony, the Lord Chancellor, bewailing the loss, vowing that no possession in the world, except Ireland, was of so much consequence as Minorca; making all kinds of wild suggestions for recovering it; dreading the Opposition would blame him singly, and finally urging his friend to talk seriously to Anson about preparing their defence and for the "immediate trial and condemnation of Byng."[1] Every day the alarm of the Ministers grew, and with it the general demoralisation. A month later Lord Chief-Justice Willes, returning from circuit, reported the excited condition of the country, and assured Newcastle that the only way was that Byng must be punished capitally.[2] So in a political panic was set on foot the notorious tragedy which ended on March 14, 1757, as Byng fell before a platoon of marines on the quarter-deck of the *Monarque* in Portsmouth Harbour.

That the Ministers had the letter of the law on their side is indisputable; that Byng had a fair trial is not to be denied. He was arraigned under the twelfth article of war for not having done his utmost against the enemy and of that charge no body of naval officers could acquit him, and the penalty was death. Every man of them knew that it was more than the offence deserved, and to a man they honestly strove to get a reduction of the sentence which their duty compelled them to pronounce. Their efforts were backed by Pitt, with all the ardour which his high sense of justice and his detestation of the Ministers could inflame. From beyond the sea came protests from no less people than Richelieu and Voltaire,

[1] Newcastle to Hardwicke, July 19, *Add. MSS.* 32,866.
[2] Willes, L. C. J., to Newcastle, Aug. 21, *ibid.*, 32,867.

while lesser men at home flooded the press with pamphlets in the unhappy admiral's defence. All was in vain. The Ministers, and above all the King, were inexorable. It was for no mere tactical shortcoming that Byng died. It was the strategical incompetence, the failure to grasp the tremendous European issues that had fallen into his hands that could not be forgiven. Of personal cowardice the Court expressly acquitted him, but he must always stand condemned as having failed at a crucial moment in that higher courage that hardens a man's heart to measure risks only by the greatness of the object at stake.

Judged by the same test, Anson came off badly. The distribution of the fleet, for which he seems to have been really responsible, was faulty. Allowing much for the deflecting influence of commercial nervousness, he undoubtedly overestimated the force that was necessary in the Channel, and though perfectly capable of resisting Newcastle's evil influence when he chose, he gave in to the ill-instructed fear that prevailed. To order Osborne to return in February instead of proceeding to the Mediterranean and to send Hawke away cruising for commerce with a battle fleet was bad enough, but to reinforce Boscawen off Brest in April, and again in June, when he was already superior to the fleet he had to watch, seems quite inexcusable. Boscawen himself was mainly to blame, for he kept sending in alarming reports of the French strength and clamouring for more ships. Anson, against his better judgment, gave way. "I don't know how it comes to pass," he wrote querulously to Newcastle, "but unless our commanders-in-chief have a very great superiority of the enemy they never think themselves safe."[1] Out of his own mouth, then, he must be con-

[1] Anson to Newcastle, June 6, *ibid.*, 32,865.

demned. By his own hand he is convicted of weakly keeping in the Channel a force which he knew to be excessive, and of not having had the resolution to ignore the importunity of a nervous admiral. Again and again in those critical weeks he certainly had at his disposal a force which, if sent to the Mediterranean, would either have stopped Richelieu's sailing altogether or have destroyed his expedition.

Still, it must be said in his defence that he never really believed that Port Mahon was in danger, and for this conviction there was much excuse. The eccentric attack on Minorca involved a strategical error. As a naval position it had no relation to the object of the war. Its capture did little to improve the French position in regard to America, and, so long as we held Gibraltar, it in no way injured ours. The only gain it could be to France was that it made the permanent blockade of Toulon impossible, but at the same time it freed us from the task of defending an outpost that was eccentric to every theatre of the war. And thus in the end—so inexorable is the working of strategical law—the loss of the place soon proved to be a distinct advantage to us, and no attempt was made to recover it. But this was far from clear at first, and for a while it seemed—till the startling revolution that was going on in the European system declared itself—that we had suffered an irreparable loss.

Accordingly, at first the leading idea was how to recover the ground from which we had been driven. For a month Hawke kept up a strict blockade of Minorca, intercepting all supplies and raiding the island to supply his own wants. The indefatigable Tyrawly produced a scheme for retaking Mahon with a flotilla of armed xebecs under the wing of Hawke's fleet. Others favoured an attempt on Corsica, the Genoese, its owners, having

flagrantly violated their neutrality by helping to man Galissonière's fleet. But nothing was done. A deadlock had been produced, and the strategical situation in the Mediterranean was more than Hawke could solve. It fairly beat him, and for this reason it is of interest. The Toulon squadron, instead of being paid off as was expected, was kept on foot ready for sea in the road. Hawke was cleverly fed with information that it was their intention any day to come out and fight him, and no doubt he believed that his blockade of Minorca would compel them to do so, but beyond this he did nothing to force their hand. For this he can scarcely be blamed. For as a matter of fact Galissonière and his officers were perpetually clamouring to be allowed to go out and fight him. But permission never came, probably because it was seen that so long as the British made no attempt to re-establish themselves another battle was not worth the risk. To seek a decision was to play the British game. Their own demanded no more than that the local command should be kept in dispute by a judicious defensive. Their Mediterranean policy was centred on occupying Corsica to complete their position, and the Toulon fleet must be kept intact to cover the operation. As early as the first week in August a convention authorising them to take this step had been signed with Genoa, but still, although Galissonière was now ready for sea with sixteen of the line, he was not allowed to depart from his expectant attitude. Unless Hawke moved, the occupation could wait till the winter forced him to retire. Should Hawke then have done nothing to break the situation? It is difficult to believe that if he had even threatened Corsica the Toulon fleet would not have been forced to fight him. It seems it had been actually expected at home that he would do something of this

kind, and complaints of his inaction reached him in September. His defence was that his information assured him the French were coming out to seek him. Supposing this were not true, he contended that it would have been a false move to force a decision by threatening Corsica. If he had moved there with his whole fleet it would have left the straits open for the French to get to America or to concentrate on Brest. If he had divided his fleet he would have exposed himself to be beaten in detail.[1] His argument is sound enough. No one thought of blaming him for his attitude or even of accusing him of want of enterprise. Still the fact remains that he added another item to the long list of cases in which a British admiral was fairly beaten by the enemy's defensive.

The deadlock continued with nothing done except that when the Tuscan authorities at Leghorn seized that famous privateer Fortunatus Wright, Hawke was able to show his teeth and insist on his instant release. By the end of October the Home Government had found it necessary, so vast were the changes that were going on in the situation, to recall him to the Channel. About the same time Galissonière died on his way to Paris, and the French Government on their part ordered the Toulon fleet to be paid off. There was no further need for it. For in the first days of November a French force of less than 4000 men assembled quietly at Antibes, slipped across to Corsica under escort of a few frigates and gunboats, and occupied the coveted island. So without any interference the French found themselves established in what their strategists call "that fine triangle, Toulon, Mahon, St. Florent."[2]

[1] See his despatch of September 23, *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters*, 90.
[2] Lacour-Gayet, *La Marine Militaire sous Louis XV.*, p. 276. Chevalier, *Hist. de la Marine Française jusqu'au* 1763, p. 299.

Before the end of November Hawke's order of recall reached him, and ill and dispirited he carried his fleet home, to find the whole strategical situation changed, Newcastle's Government upset, and another reigning at the Admiralty in the place of his friend Lord Anson.

CHAPTER VI

THE PRUSSIAN ALLIANCE AND WAR PLAN

THE moment it was known in London that the French had landed in Minorca England declared war. The Ministers were satisfied they had won the wary game, and by forcing France to begin open war had secured the defensive position for which both sides had been scheming. Spain, indeed, at once expressed her disapproval of the step France had taken, and with a light heart Newcastle formally demanded of Holland the 6000 troops she was bound to provide if England were attacked. He even sent transports to fetch them. But the falseness of the British position quickly declared itself. The Dutch refused assistance. Their contention still was that by Boscawen's action we had made ourselves the aggressors, and that no *casus fœderis* had arisen. Within a week of our declaration of war they issued a declaration of neutrality. All protest was in vain, the defenceless state of the British islands left no time for argument, and the squadron which had gone to fetch the expected troops had to carry the transports on to the Elbe to fetch Hanoverians instead.

This introduction of foreign troops for the defence of England remains indelibly as one of the blots upon our military history. But unsightly as is the stain, it should be remembered in mitigation that it was a hasty and temporary expedient, rendered necessary by the breakdown of a perfectly legitimate defensive treaty which

had become by long tradition an integral part of our national defence. It must also be remembered that the danger of invasion was directly due to the success of our efforts to secure the immunity of Hanover. Consequently to transfer force from a secure part of the King's dominions to one that was threatened by the enemy's main attack was a sane and justifiable piece of strategy.

Doubtless Newcastle and his friends were the victims of an invasion panic, but the fear was not without some justification. They had good reason to believe that they had manœuvred France into a position which left her no move except the desperate expedient of invasion. They were still as firmly convinced that they had tied her hands on the Continent as they had been that all the Powers concerned must treat her as the aggressor. Their strenuous diplomatic struggle, to which the naval and military movement had hitherto been subservient, seemed to have ended in committing France to a maritime war, and in making it impossible for her to move a finger in Europe. But in this belief they were as wrong as in the other. No sooner, indeed, had they declared war than it began to be obvious that their elaborate scheme for confining the war to the Colonial sphere had failed, and that the struggle was going to take the form which was most dangerous to England, and which the Ministers were quite unprepared to face. The anxiety and sense of failure that ensued, though they will not excuse, go far to explain the animosity against Byng. For with the news of his defeat came the discovery that the whole British system had broken down.

It began, like the original negotiation, with Russia. The defensive treaty which we had signed with the

Czarina had contained a clause in which each party bound itself to confide to the other any steps that might be taken towards negotiations with the "common enemy." No name was actually mentioned, but Frederick the Great was none the less clearly indicated. The effect of that treaty, as we have seen, had been more drastic than was expected. It straightway forced Frederick into our arms, and the Treaty of Westminster was the result. The negotiations had been absolutely secret. Not a hint had been imparted to the Czarina. As the new treaty was one designed to preserve the neutrality of Hanover and North Germany, she had in effect nothing material to complain of. Still it was undoubtedly a piece of sharp practice. To the Czarina, in her detestation of Frederick's personality, it was a piece of inexcusable perfidy, as indeed it would have been had not everybody been playing a similar game. A storm of indignation was the result, and it was in this ill-wind that the Empress Maria Theresa saw her chance. A picture formed itself in her mind, and in that of her astute Chancellor Kaunitz, of a mighty coalition with Russia, Sweden, Saxony, Poland, and the Catholic German States for the recovery of Silesia and the dismemberment of Prussia. For this however France, the old and hereditary enemy, must be considered. Her benevolent neutrality at least must be secured. Perhaps more would come. So with the nicest cleverness France was approached at first as though the object were merely to secure peace in Europe, upon which Louis and the Pompadour were still fanatically set. Then step by step she was led on. In vain she struggled. The cards were too good for her, and they were played with consummate skill; till at last, towards the end of May 1756, it became known that a defensive treaty

between the two traditional enemies had been signed at Versailles.

So far as it was intended to be made public the arrangement consisted of two conventions, which amounted to an entire reversal of the lines upon which European policy had run for centuries. In the long series of wars between France and England, the House of Burgundy, now represented by the House of Austria, had been the ally of England. The most telling move of France had always been to concentrate her operations against the Netherlands in order to get possession of them, and so increase at once her own industrial wealth and destroy the security of the English naval position. Austria and England had therefore been natural allies, and no one dreamed the relations could ever change. But the whole fabric was now upset. On the one hand the Empress agreed not to assist the ancient ally of her House in the war that was beginning, but to observe a strict neutrality, while France on her part was to respect the Austrian Netherlands. This was the first convention. The second was for mutual defence, and provided for the reciprocal guarantee of each other's dominions "against the attacks of any power whatsoever, the case of the present war between France and England only excepted." In case of attack each party was to defend the other with an army of 24,000 men.

So far there was nothing to disturb the British position. But behind these innocent arrangements were five secret articles, in which the sting lay. In these the Empress declared herself ready, notwithstanding the above declaration of neutrality, to intervene in the present war if any power in alliance with England, or acting as her auxiliary, meaning of course Prussia, invaded the French dominions. The King of France

was thus ensnared into giving Austria a reciprocal guarantee. Further, both parties agreed to invite the accession of the Emperor in his quality of Grand Duke of Tuscany, the Kings of Spain and Naples, or any other power they considered desirable.

Such a treaty was an earthquake in the European system. No one knew what to think. No one less than France herself could tell where it would lead. The old lie of the strata, which the diplomatic world had come to regard as the bed-rock of their art, was torn and twisted past all recognition. At this very time England, following the traditional lines of her policy, was pressing Austria with fresh overtures for a renewal of the old system. All was now useless. The first week in June the Treaty of Versailles, as it was called, was known all over Europe. Austria, who had been entertaining the British overtures purely to mask her real game, rejected them without ceremony. At the same moment Holland finally refused to admit that a *casus fœderis* had arisen. Then behind the new treaty began to appear symptoms of the great northern confederation against Prussia, with the possibility of its spreading to the Mediterranean. At no moment could the loss of Minorca have been more alarming. Not only was it in the hands of France as a bribe for Spain, but by losing it we had let slip our main hold upon the waters, which for nearly a century had given us our only firm control over Continental politics.

Bewildered and exasperated, Newcastle lost his head. He displayed a tendency to hit out wildly, first at Byng, and then—he knew not where. In the same letter that he urged the admiral's condemnation he told Hardwicke they must take the offensive somewhere—commanders by sea and land must suggest where. If they could only agree on some object of attack in the Mediterranean, the

West Indies, America, anywhere, it would keep up the people's spirit. To Fox he suggested Corsica or Louisbourg. Somehow they must get back Mahon, though he knows no one agrees with him. Why should not Hawke and Tyrawly try if it were practicable? "I am for trying everything," he concluded. "I own I think the best way to regain it is in America. Let us begin there at once."[1] It was when opinion was in this condition that Hawke had been instructed to operate against Corsica, in order to conceal from the French what the real line of action was to be. For all idea of taking the island had soon been abandoned, and in its place arose an interesting though vague adumbration of the system on which Pitt eventually fought the war. The Secret Committee of the Council agreed to ask the King to authorise "for that year or the next spring an attempt on some possession of the French king either in the Mediterranean or on the coast of France, or in the West Indies or in North America, as an exchange for Minorca. And that such offensive measures should be undertaken as may employ and divert the naval force of France in such manner as may give his Majesty's fleet more liberty to act against them." This ill-digested scheme, bred of a vague instinct that the initiative must be regained, labours under the radical objection that it loses sight of the object of the war. Minorca usurps the place of America. Still the plan was shown to the King, and so serious did the loss of the island then look that he approved it.[2]

Yet the immediate reconquest of the island was politically unnecessary. So much was already apparent. For

[1] Newcastle to Hardwicke, July 19; same to Fox, July 24, *Add. MSS.* 32,866.

[2] *Newcastle Papers* (*Cabinet Memoranda*), *Add. MSS.* 32,997, Aug. 6, 1756.

Keene from Madrid was able to give the strongest assurances possible that the Spanish court, outraged at the unnatural alliance between Bourbon and Hapsburg, was taking the Minorca affair worse than ever, and was daily more determined to stand by England. The position in the Mediterranean, therefore, was free from immediate anxiety. Still the tension was scarcely relieved. For as the calm settled down in the South it became clear that the storm centre had only shifted to the North, and there all attention was riveted.

At first both France and England had believed that the new Treaty of Versailles would act merely as a further guarantee against the war spreading to Europe. Neither of them penetrated the Austrian designs. But Austria was hard at work. The Elector of Saxony, who, as King of Poland, carried both states with him, was only too eager to join in getting his revenge on Prussia for all he had suffered in the last war. Russia was scarcely less ready, and was even coquetting for a restoration of her long broken diplomatic relations with France. In Tuscany and Naples there was less success. The attitude of Spain and the presence of Hawke's fleet in the Mediterranean kept the Italian princes quiet, but in the North there was danger enough, and Frederick quickly got wind of it. Sometimes as violent and direct in thought as in action, he at once persuaded himself that an offensive alliance between Russia, Saxony, and Austria already existed. It was not true, but perhaps as good as true, and he determined to take the bull by the horns. And while his secret preparations went on he began candidly to seek British assistance.

Early in June he sent for Sir Andrew Mitchell, our newly-arrived ambassador in Berlin, and told him of the coalition which he believed Austria to be forming for the

partition of Prussia. He pointed out that its effect would be to bring to nothing the elaborate British scheme for preserving the neutrality of Northern Germany. Early next year, in consequence of the action he intended to take against Austria, France would pass the Rhine, and Hanover would be in jeopardy. Under these circumstances he declared himself perfectly ready to stand by his engagements under the Treaty of Westminster, if England would make it possible. He felt himself everywhere equal to the situation except in one direction, and that was Russia. He desired to know, therefore, whether, if Russia moved against him, England would send a fleet into the Baltic to his assistance. "And to this," wrote Mitchell, "he desired to have a precise answer in order to make proper dispositions accordingly."[1]

So the note was struck which was to give the great struggle its peculiar key. A precise answer was not so easy. King George, of course, preoccupied with the security of his Electoral dominions, saw the importance of the suggestion, but the British Ministers were equally absorbed in finding sufficient force afloat for the needs of the empire. The true relations between the position in America and the position in Northern Germany were not yet seen. Moreover Frederick's antecedents had bred in his neighbours' minds, and not least in his uncle's, an incurable mistrust; nor did we as yet despair of keeping Russia quiet. Besides, the request was particularly inopportune, for it came simultaneously with the news of the loss of Minorca. The reply, therefore, was coloured with the prevailing anxiety. It dwelt on the extensive possessions of Great Britain and her small army, "so little proportioned to the defence of such extended dominions that the marine is necessarily employed to

[1] *Newcastle Papers, Add. MSS.* 32,865, June 10.

garrison them." Still King George would do his utmost to provide a Baltic squadron "whenever it shall be absolutely necessary."[1]

Frederick had no reason to resent the reception of his overtures, and an exchange of views went on, in which a joint plan of action was gradually developed. On July 9th Frederick was informed that England was ready to sign a regular defensive treaty, and to take active steps if Prussia were invaded. At the same time, however, he was warned that "some of our most experienced sea-officers had their doubts as to the utility of great ships in the defence of the coast of the King of Prussia from invasion," since it might be carried on in galleys and light draft vessels in the teeth of a greatly superior naval force. Moreover, if a fleet were actually sent into the Baltic some of the extensive duties of the navy must be neglected, but steps were already being taken to augment it.[2] Frederick replied contentedly with a regular plan of campaign, in which was first foreshadowed the line that Pitt eventually adopted. He insisted on nothing, but would be grateful for a squadron in the Baltic. Still, if his uncle required it elsewhere, especially for the defence of his own islands, he would say nothing about it. In deference, moreover, to the unreadiness of Hanover and the British hopes of securing Russia, he would defer striking his blow till August, when it would be too late for France to enter Westphalia before winter.

An integral part of the scheme was of course the Hanoverian army, and Frederick hoped his uncle would use the respite in preparing for its mobilisation in the spring, and in getting the Dutch to join it so as to bring

[1] Holderness to Mitchell, June 25, *Mitchell Papers*, *Add. MSS.* 6811.
[2] Holderness to Mitchell, July 9, *ibid.*

it up to some 70,000 men. Such a force established in Frederick's duchy of Berg, that is, on the Lower Rhine about Cologne, while between it and the Dutch frontier Frederick himself held his fortress of Wesel and his duchy of Cleves, would be quite enough to keep the French in check and so secure Hanover and Frederick's own right flank from attack. But for this defensive scheme to work one important condition remained. And here it was that came in the suggestion of which Pitt was to make so much. "If," so Frederick's memorandum ran, "France strips her Channel coasts to form her army," that is, the army of the Rhine, for the invasion of Westphalia, "the English fleet can profit by it and make descents on the naked coasts and spread an alarm the whole length of Brittany and Normandy. If she keeps her troops on the coasts the army of the Rhine can only be 50,000. But it must be set about at once, so as to be ready for action early in 1757."[1] Thus was formulated, from the pen of one of the greatest soldiers of all time, the theory of the containing power that lies in combined expeditions, and of the disturbing influence which a fleet properly used can exercise upon Continental strategy. On this theory Pitt's system was based. His persistence in using the method was ridiculed at the time and long afterwards by professional critics. Possibly they would have been less free with their contempt had they known that the suggestion first came from their own particular idol.

Having brought matters thus far, Frederick felt he might strike the blow he had in contemplation. On September 20th an ultimatum was suddenly presented at Vienna demanding an immediate explanation of the Austrian armament that was going on. No explanation

[1] *Newcastle Papers*, 32,866, July 26.

was forthcoming, and ten days later Frederick made a rapid movement across the Saxon frontier, which then lay only a few leagues from Berlin, and promptly seized Dresden. The Elector had retired with his army up the Elbe to Pirna, close to the Bohemian frontier, with the intention of reaching Poland through Austrian territory. But again Frederick was too quick for him, and by another rapid movement the Elector and his army were surrounded and cut off from Bohemia. In vain he tried to escape, in vain he negotiated, in vain the Austrian Marshal Browne with the Bohemian army strove to extricate him. By the middle of October he was forced to capitulate, and Saxony was in Frederick's hands. Thus at a blow both Saxony and Poland were paralysed, and Frederick had driven a wedge into the heart of the coalition against him. The immediate consequence was that France finally broke off relations with Prussia and the Seven Years' War had fairly begun.

For the realisation of what Frederick hoped from the Anglo-Prussian alliance, no moment could have been more inopportune. In England a Ministerial crisis had been brewing ever since the fall of Mahon was known, and while Frederick had been busy in Saxony it had come to a head. News of fresh reverses which were laid at the door of Newcastle's half-hearted measures completed the general exasperation which Minorca had begun. From India came tidings of the loss of Calcutta and the terrible story of the "Black Hole." From America it was the same. Instead of the programme for pushing back the French preparatory to an invasion of Canada having taken effect, Montcalm had succeeded in getting possession of one of our most important advanced ports, Oswego on Lake Ontario. The command of the Great Lakes was gone; with the port went the ships; and one of

the principal avenues into Canada was thus closed, and we seemed further from our end than ever. In October it became clear that the popular cry for Pitt could no longer be disregarded, and after vain efforts to get him to serve in the old Cabinet, Newcastle was forced to resign. His place as Prime Minister was taken by the Duke of Devonshire, but it was Pitt who formed the Government. His friends were few. The most intimate of them, his brother-in-law Lord Temple, he placed at the Admiralty in Anson's room, while he himself became Foreign Secretary for the South, leaving Holderness where he was, in charge of the North. At the Admiralty Boscawen, whom no political storm could wreck, retained his seat, and for a colleague he had Temple West, the First Lord's cousin. But it was a hopeless arrangement from the first. Newcastle still had a majority in both Houses of Parliament, and Pitt had no real party at all. Still he did the best which persistent attacks of the gout would let him, and the English share in the war began to take shape.

The Houses met on December 2nd, and in the Speech from the Throne were laid down the lines of that great and clearly seen war policy on which Pitt's renown mainly rests. At the outset he sweeps away the confused counsels of his predecessors as to where the true line for offensive action lay. Stretching out his masterly hand to the main object of the war, he seizes it and fixes it firmly as the pivot upon which our whole strategy must turn. "The succour and preservation of America," so ran the King's Speech, "cannot but constitute a main object of my attention and solicitude; and the growing dangers to which our colonies may stand exposed from the late losses in those parts demand resolutions of vigour and despatch." So the announcement of the new policy

opens. Then came the means—the subordinate defensive measures by which all great offensive operations must be buttressed. "An adequate and firm defence at home must have the chief place in my thoughts. . . . To this end . . . I recommend the framing of a militia to the care and diligence of my Parliament." Lastly (and for Pitt, by the logic of his system, it was always lastly) comes "the unnatural union of Councils abroad." The calamities it threatened, so the King was made to say, "must sensibly affect the minds of this nation, and have fixed the eye of Europe on this new and dangerous crisis." Nothing could more clearly intimate Pitt's view that the European situation must only be regarded in so far as it affected our Imperial struggle. Finally came the touch which was of the very essence of his policy, the fire which gave life to the cold logic of his system and showed how, like all great strategists, he knew the value of the proud spirit of a warlike people, and how to awake it for his use. So the announcement ended with these words: "The body of my Electoral troops which I ordered hither at the desire of my Parliament, I have directed to return to my dominions in Germany, relying with pleasure on the spirit and zeal of my people in defence of my person and realm. Gentlemen of the House of Commons . . . I rely on your wisdom that you will prefer more vigorous efforts to a less effectual and therefore less frugal plan of war."

To us that know what came of the appeal, it rings like a trumpet-call sounding in advance the triumph of that brilliant policy which was to give the empire its dominant shape. Nor was it an empty cry. Action followed like its shadow. A militia bill was at once introduced; the striking force, already greatly enlarged by the new regiments that had been raised, was still further increased by Pitt's final adoption of the half-

dreaded policy of Highland battalions; and finally plans were worked out for a concentrated blow at Louisbourg and Quebec by using the fleet and the army together. But of the part we were to take on the Continent not a word appeared.[1]

It was no wonder, then, that our ally grew anxious. He had fired his pistol into the magazine, and everything around him was rocking and in flames. Yet when he looked over his right shoulder towards Hanover he could see no sign of preparation. The line of supply-depôts along the Weser, which he had urged as essential to holding the position on the Lower Rhine, had not been begun. For five weeks, while the English Ministerial crisis lasted, he had not heard from London, and he lost patience. Fearing that the deadlock in England

[1] For the best account of the origin of the Highland regiments see a note by Colonel E. M. Lloyd, R.E., in the *Eng. Hist. Rev.*, xvii. 466. The idea had been in the air a long time. "The Black Watch" gendarmerie companies had been formed into a regiment in 1739, and had already gone out to America with Loudoun. Wolfe had suggested new companies for Colonial service in 1751. A proposal for increasing the force was submitted to Cumberland in 1756. Many thought the idea full of danger. Cumberland approved it, and submitted to Pitt when he came to power a proposal for two or three new regiments (Dec. 4). Next day Hardwicke talked it over with him. Hardwicke thought it dangerous, but Pitt said "they would do well in North America, and that it would be a drain and not many would return." Probably this cynical view was not Pitt's real motive for adopting the idea, but merely his way of answering Hardwicke's objection; for before Hardwicke left he says he was inclined to think the measure would "gain the Scotch." (Hardwicke to Newcastle, Dec. 6, 1756, *Newcastle Papers*, 32,868.) Newcastle, on hearing of it, said he had proposed raising Highland regiments for America a year ago, but the King had rejected it with scorn. (*Ibid.*, 32,869, Dec. 11.) On Jan. 11, 1757, Newcastle again wrote, "I most entirely disapprove the method of these Highland regiments. The Duke, I hear, disapproves and submits. It is wholly the Duke of Argyle." (*Ibid.*, 32,870.) This apparent contradiction must not be taken as meaning that Cumberland and Newcastle disapproved the policy, but only Argyle's method of carrying it out. From the whole it is clear that Pitt's credit in the matter must be confined to his having taken the responsibility of adopting the policy, and to the rapidity with which it was given practical shape.

would mean losing the spring campaign, he sent over a memorandum to press his strategical views on the new Government. In this he indicated broadly the action which the enemy would take, and urged its dangers, and how they should be met. Firstly, he said, Maria Theresa would demand of France the stipulated contingent of 24,000 men to co-operate with the Austrian forces against Silesia; and secondly, the French would mass an army of sixty battalions on the Lower Rhine. With this force they would try to penetrate to Hanover by way of Cleves, and they would begin by surprising his own fortress at Wesel, since it was in effect the principal outwork of Hanover, and necessary to secure their retreat.[1] Frederick's information was not quite correct. It is true that immediately after he had struck his blow at Dresden Austria had demanded the stipulated contingent of France, but France refused. She protested her present inability to furnish it owing to "the necessity of keeping troops on the coasts of the ocean and the Channel, in Dauphiné and the Cevennes, in Corsica and Minorca, and to her other obligation under the Treaty of Versailles to form an army on the Lower Rhine to watch Holland."[2]

It is interesting to note that the main reasons for the French refusal exactly coincide with the various means for thwarting her which Frederick pointed out in the second part of his memorandum. First and foremost amongst the measures open to his ally he placed demonstrations against the coasts of Normandy and Brittany. Secondly, the acquisition of Corsica or some other equivalent for Minorca in the Mediterranean. Thirdly, diversions in Africa, America, and India.

[1] *Newcastle Papers, Add. MSS.* 32,869, Dec. 9.
[2] Waddington, *La Guerre de Sept Ans*, vol. i. p. 86.

Fourthly, he again urged the speedy formation of a German army of 44,000 men by subsidising Hesse, Brunswick, Gotha, and the rest of the condottiere princes. If the Dutch could be induced to contribute 20,000 men, so much the better. Fifthly, he suggested some diversion by the King of Sardinia. It was this danger that threatened Dauphiné and the Cevennes, as well as Corsica. Sixthly, a possible diversion by the Porte; and lastly, that a fleet for the Baltic should be secured by gaining Denmark with a promise to guarantee Schleswig.[1]

It was so Frederick's clear eyes saw the war, and saw where the strength of his ally lay. At this time, at any rate, he was under no illusions as to the kind of help he could expect. England had her own war to fight, her own ends upon which her main offensive must be concentrated, and all her action could only enter into his own strategical design by way of diversion. He looked for no more from her than operations to contain a certain proportion of the French forces, to confuse French strategy, and relieve the pressure on himself. There is not so much as a hint of direct military action on the Continent after the manner of the old wars. It was as though his unrivalled strategical grasp told him that the army of a sea-power so used lost half its strength, and that if employed amphibiously in combination with the fleet, it could produce results out of all proportion to its weight as a mere military force.

The anxiety which produced this remarkable document was soon relieved. Scarcely had it been despatched when he received from Holderness a formal assurance that the new Government meant to continue the policy of the old, and that in testimony of their good faith they

[1] *Newcastle Papers*, 32,869, Dec. 9.

were already sending back the Hessians and Hanoverians. Still Frederick could not quite trust them. Pitt had made himself notorious as the implacable opponent of Continental operations, and even of supporting them with subsidies. Frederick had indeed already given secret orders to his governor at Wesel to prepare to dismantle the place, and fall back on the Weser, when, to confirm the verbal assurance he had received, the new year brought clear manifestation of the new spirit that was stirring in England.

His scheme, at least so far as British resources would go, had been adopted in its entirety. King George informed him that the Hanoverian army of observation had orders to assemble at Lippe to cover Hanover, and to be ready to act as required in the spring, in concert with Frederick's advanced force at Wesel. Pitt had offered to ask Parliament for a subsidy of £200,000 for its maintenance. Mitchell was to proceed at once to settle with the Brunswickers, while to Denmark had been offered a similar subsidy of £200,000, if in return she would consent to provide 8000 troops for the army of observation, and a squadron of twelve of the line in the Baltic. This looked more like earnest. For it was clear that if Denmark accepted, not only would Frederick's right be protected on land, but there would also be a Baltic fleet to cover his rear from Russia and Sweden.

Pitt's readiness to go so far in the matter of subsidies was generally regarded as a change of front. No one had denounced them more loudly than he. But it was only a failure to grasp the wide range of his system and the sound co-ordination of its parts that led to the charge of inconsistency. The strategy his proposal connoted was as wide as the poles from the old Continental offensive. To carry the war to a successful conclusion, it was essen-

tial for ultimate diplomatic reasons to preserve the integrity of Hanover, and that again rested on the integrity of Prussia. They were part of the thrust block on whose resistance depended the full development of British energy. Pitt fully recognised the law that a concentrated offensive against the main object in a limited war is never possible without a strong defensive elsewhere, and the defensive use of subsidies in this case was as essential to British offensive action as were our fleet and our striking force. For the time the subsidising of the Hanoverian army was all that was required, though it will be seen that as the struggle increased in violence this part of the machine had to be strengthened.

Side by side with these measures the main offensive was being prepared. At the end of January seven regiments besides one already ordered by Newcastle were selected for America, where Lord Loudoun, the commander-in-chief, was organising a force for the reduction of Louisbourg. A powerful fleet was also being brought forward to co-operate. The original intention, it is said, had been to place it under the command of Hawke, but as he was wanted elsewhere it was given to Rear-Admiral Holburne.[1] The best talent available was certainly required, for already Pitt had conceived the great design with which his name as a War Minister is most conspicuously associated. Louisbourg was but a stepping-stone. His intention was to follow its capture by sending a combined operation up the St. Lawrence to deal a blow at Quebec itself. Sanguine and chimerical as such a scheme appeared before Pitt had taught the country of what high performance it was capable, it did not exhaust the comprehensiveness or the ambition of his strategy. No part of the great Imperial system was left unguarded. Even Frederick's suggestion

[1] Thackeray, *Hist. of Lord Chatham*, vol. i. p. 268.

as to the West Coast of Africa was not forgotten, and Pitt was warmly taking up the scheme of Mr. Thomas Cumming, the famous "Fighting Quaker," who, having made a treaty with a powerful native chief for dispossessing the French at Senegal, was at home endeavouring to secure the necessary force.[1] In India a squadron under Vice-Admiral Watson and Rear-Admiral Pocock was already at work. In conjunction with Clive they had just retaken Calcutta, and were about to proceed against the factory which the French had established higher up the river at Chandernagore to intercept the Bengal trade.

That Pitt was in high earnest for putting Frederick's plan in force there can be no doubt. So soon as ever his gout permitted him to go down to the House, which was not till the middle of February, he devoted himself to getting it accepted. His first effort was a fine defence of the Prussian treaty, which brought him a handsome acknowledgment from Frederick. His next was for the Hanoverian subsidy, which he carried triumphantly. But forces at work against him thwarted his utmost efforts. The antipathy of the King, instead of being appeased, grew stronger every day. In spite of Pitt's handsome action in regard to his beloved Electoral dominions, he sent for Fox and then for Newcastle, imploring them to return to his Council. Neither would consent if Pitt remained. Whether he would have dismissed the popular Minister of his own motion we cannot tell, but it was not long before events hardened his heart to risk the step. The Hanoverian Ministers had by no means accepted their sovereign's policy. They were still bent on saving their country from war by getting Austria to agree to its neutrality, and instead of making the preparations which

[1] Pitt to Cumming, Feb. 9, 1757, *Chatham Corr.*, vol. i. p. 221.

their sovereign had promised to Prussia, they were devoting their energy to these forlorn negotiations. The King's protests and commands seemed alike useless, and at last he made up his mind there was no way of keeping his recalcitrant Ministers in order except by sending over his son, the Duke of Cumberland, to represent him and take command of the army. Frederick himself, furious at what was going on, had already asked for him.[1] Cumberland, however, having no faith in his own abilities or in Frederick's policy, was by no means anxious to go. He made difficulties, particularly about being under the direction of Pitt. His mistrust and dislike of the new Minister were as strong as his father's; and finally, it is said, he firmly refused to go at all unless Pitt were removed. However this may be, Temple, Pitt's right-hand man, was dismissed from the Admiralty on April 5th, and as Pitt refused to resign he was served in the same manner the following day. Three days later Cumberland sailed to take up his command.[2]

So at the critical moment fell Pitt's first administration. To form a new one was found impossible. A howl of indignation arose from end to end of the country. Addresses of condolence poured in upon Pitt, and for weeks, as Walpole says, "it rained gold boxes." Not one of the intriguers, who had egged on the distracted old king, would face the storm. Fox, Newcastle, Halifax, Robinson, all refused to come to his aid on the plea that a Parliamentary inquiry into their conduct of the war was about to open. The Duke of Devonshire consented to continue as a stop-gap, while the Admiralty was given to the Earl of Winchelsea, a man of high character if not

[1] Waddington, *Guerre de Sept Ans*, vol. i. pp. 193-5.

[2] Hardwicke confirms this view of the cause of Pitt's dismissal in a letter to Anson, April 9 (*Anson Corr., Add. MSS.* 15,956).

of great abilities, who had held the office twice before, the last time being in the Jacobite crisis of 1745. Boscawen remained as his First Sea Lord. By this time "Old Dreadnought," or "Wry-necked Dick" as he was popularly called, seems to have been generally accepted as a fixture, partly perhaps from his personal qualities, though his irremovability may also be taken as an indication of the growing instinct for freeing the navy from the disturbance of party politics so as to give to its administration a greater continuity.

Continuity was certainly wanted, and nowhere more than at the Admiralty. Pitt had not yet been able to stamp the services, as he afterwards did, with his own energy, and everything was dragging badly. The Louisbourg expedition had not yet sailed, nor was it till April 16th, all too late for any great success, that Holburne got it to sea, and even then he had to go to Ireland to pick up the troops. Apart from this its prospects were far from brilliant, for the blockade of the French ports, which ought to have covered it, had everywhere broken down. At Gibraltar, Rear-Admiral Saunders, who had been left behind by Hawke in the Mediterranean with a squadron of five sail, made a gallant effort to stop a French squadron of the same number under M. du Revest, which came out of Toulon bound for Louisbourg early in April. But Saunders's ships were too foul to deal with the Frenchmen fresh out of dock. Revest had the speed and got clear away. It was not till May that Saunders was reinforced by Vice-Admiral Osborne, who at the same time took over the command. With Brest we had no better luck. At the end of January, before the blockade was established, the Chevalier de Bauffremont had got away with five of the line to the West Indies under orders to proceed, after fulfilling his duties there,

to Louisbourg. When formed, the blockade was in charge of Temple West. For a time he managed to keep in the main Brest squadron, but it was under Du Bois de la Motte, and the luck which in the previous year had delivered him from Hawke and Boscawen did not desert him. May came in with a gale which drove West off, and De la Motte was able to put out untouched with nine of the line and three frigates, all bound for Louisbourg. Four days later Holburne sailed from Cork with his transports and their escort of seventeen of the line, five frigates and a dozen smaller cruisers, bound for Halifax; but as luck would have it he saw nothing of De la Motte. To make matters worse, the same gale which let out De la Motte also enabled D'Aché to get free with a squadron to oppose Watson in the East Indies. So it was under every presage of evil fortune that Pitt's system was first put in motion.

As Holburne's great fleet makes its way across the Atlantic and the skilful concentration of the French to oppose him is drawing to its focus, it will be well to get a view of the whole area of the war, of which the Louisbourg expedition was the main effort of England.

Austria at last was ready. Her armies were mobilised and her treaties made. Frederick had been placed under the ban of the Empire, and most of the Imperial States with the exception of the four Protestant princes of the North, who were acting with Hanover and in British pay, were slowly coming into line. On May 1st a new treaty between France and Austria had been signed at Versailles which was offensive as well as defensive, and so after eighteen months' struggle Austria had hooked her fish. The old European system was thus finally turned upside down, and thus, too, in the end the astute diplomacy of England had stumbled to an undreamt

success. The diplomatic revolution had begun with the treaty we had made with Russia in order to keep Frederick quiet, and it had ended in saddling France, at the outset of her great Imperial struggle, with the central European quarrel in which she had practically no concern. And what did she gain by it? Nothing, but an assurance that at the peace the Empress would use her best offices to secure that Minorca remained in French hands, and to induce England to permit the restoration of a naval station at Dunkirk. France had tried hard to extract a guarantee for more valuable naval advantages. She wanted the Channel Islands and Gibraltar, Bremen as a North Sea base, and an undertaking that the Emperor would forbid British vessels his Mediterranean ports. To not one of these conditions would Austria agree. Yet France, on her part, had been induced to promise everything. Besides the original auxiliary force of 24,000, she undertook to hire 10,000 German troops, and employ 100,000 of her own; to pay 12,000,000 florins a year to Austria, and half the Swedish and Saxon subsidies; and finally that she would not make peace till Silesia was recovered and Prussia completely dismembered. Then, and then only, France was to get an advance of her northern frontier into Belgium so far as to include the coveted ports of Ostend and Nieuport. Never, perhaps, was so bad a bargain made by a first-class power. It must serve as the cardinal example of the desperate expedients to which a great Continental nation may be driven when she finds herself at war upon a Colonial quarrel with a Power she cannot hope to worst upon the sea.

For Frederick, however, the situation looked as ugly as well could be. On the frontier of Bohemia, where his main operation was to be conducted, he was faced with

an Austrian army fully as strong as his own. Away to the north-eastward on his left rear the Russians had at last succeeded in mobilising and were threatening an invasion of East Prussia, and there was nothing but a comparatively weak corps under Lehwaldt to face them. On his right the Duke of Cumberland had arrived to take command of the subsidised army of observation, but the Hanoverian Ministers had absolutely refused to allow it to be moved forward to the Rhine. Their obstinacy, of course, broke down Frederick's plan, and after all he had to abandon Wesel and throw its garrison of 10,000 Prussians into Cumberland's army. Thus, ten days before the Duke reached his command, the French grand army of the Rhine had occupied the abandoned fortress, and crossing the river unmolested, had been able to push their advanced troops into Westphalia nearly up to the Ems.

But in this position the movement hung fire. The French War Office had expected that their advance must be arrested for at least a month before Wesel, during which time they would be able to collect enough forage for the final forward movement. Frederick's sudden evacuation of the place had surprised them, and though the road was clear into Westphalia they were in no condition to push on. Consequently, when at the end of April Marshal d'Estrées arrived to take command of the Rhine army, he found Cumberland had used the delay to make a forward movement, and had still further increased the French difficulties by advancing beyond the Ems and occupying Paderborn, on which they had counted for a *point d'appui*. So far, then, the position in the Westphalian theatre of the war, though not what Frederick had hoped, was fairly satisfactory, and he could feel easy about Cumberland's protection of his

right rear for some months to come. On his immediate right, however, was gathering about Erfurt an Imperial army from the states which had answered the Empress's call, and this force, stiffened by a French and an Austrian contingent, was destined to strike at his communications on the line of the Elbe, through Thuringia and Western Saxony. Finally, in the direct rear of his capital he was threatened with an incursion from Swedish Pomerania.

Under the circumstances, it is not surprising that Frederick's anxiety about his Baltic coast increased. After some hesitation he had decided to take the offensive and endeavour to crush the Austrians in Bohemia before the other parts of the combination could come into action. By the middle of April all was ready, and on the eve of making his movement he asked Mitchell once more to press the British Government for a Battle squadron. Mitchell responded handsomely. He wrote home pointing out that in a few days the fate of Europe would be decided, and urged on Holderness the moral advantage of promising a fleet before the result of the coming battle was known. If Frederick were defeated a Baltic fleet would be absolutely necessary to his existence, and it would be impossible to refuse it. If, on the other hand, he were successful it would not be wanted, and we should have given a convincing proof of loyalty to our ally.[1] But his appeal was useless. Denmark had refused to budge from her neutrality, and everything under the British flag that would float had already its allotted duty. That these duties were indispensable is not to be asserted. Owing to the great naval concentration which the French were making upon Louisbourg there was nothing left in Brest worth serious thought. But the French were playing their old game. To threaten

[1] Bisset, *Memoirs of Sir Andrew Mitchell*, April 19, 1757, vol. i. p. 241.

an invasion was no longer possible, but they kept up the distraction by organising a scheme for seizing the Channel Islands, and this, in the demoralisation of the Ministerial crisis, was enough to immobilise a large Channel fleet. A powerful cruiser squadron was all that sound strategy required, since there was no French battle fleet to interfere with its local control; but England was without a Government. There was no one to take responsibility, and even if any one had cared to order a demonstration at the entrance of the Baltic, there was still a political objection to face. Denmark and Sweden at the outbreak of the war had signed a maritime union to preserve the neutrality of their waters, and it was felt that such a demonstration would be just as likely to force Denmark as well as Sweden into the arms of the Franco-Austrian coalition as to give any real security to Frederick.

The result of the battle was soon known. The secrecy and suddenness of Frederick's movement into Bohemia took the Austrians by surprise. Forced to fall back rapidly upon Prague, they gave him battle there on May 6th, and were completely defeated. On both sides the losses were enormous, but Frederick was able, as the result of his victory, to blockade the remnants of the Austrian army in the Bohemian capital. Still that was all. His general position was little bettered. His advance, while it had failed to crush the Austrians completely, had lengthened and further exposed his precarious line of communications, and at the same time had further removed him from the Russian and Swedish dangers. Again, therefore, Mitchell was pressed for the Baltic squadron, and again the ambassador wrote pointing out how fine a chance it was for England to recover the prestige which Minorca had lost her. In London Frederick's Minister was also at work to the

same end. He was trying to get a promise that the Czarina's envoy Galitzin should be told, that if the Russian fleet threatened the Prussian coasts England would certainly send a squadron into the Baltic. In response Holderness went so far as to intimate that this attitude was contemplated. Frederick, on being informed, expressed his sincere gratification, and added a hope that diversions against the coast of France would also be made.[1] But England was still without a workable Government, and nothing could be done.

[1] *Politische Correspondenz Friedrich's des Grossen*, vol. xv. p. 35.

CHAPTER VII

ABORTIVE OPENING OF THE BRITISH ATTACK—LOUISBOURG

THE impotency of the British Government to assist in extricating Frederick from his critical situation was a serious miscarriage. The operations, of which he was the stay and centre, were the sustaining and defensive part of the war plan which Pitt had set in motion. They were the foundations on which our offensive in America rested. If they failed, everything failed. And it was just at this moment, when we found ourselves incapable of stirring a finger to underpin the tottering structure, that our main offensive movement was in the act of developing.

The plan of attack on Canada upon which Lord Loudoun proposed to act had been sent home by him in March. It was a small replica of Pitt's whole design. All the force in the American theatre that was available for attack was to be concentrated at Halifax with the force expected from home. The first objective was Louisbourg, the second Quebec, while in every other field of operation a strict defensive was to be observed in order to set free the utmost number of troops for the central movement. The defences of the Hudson and Lake George were entrusted mainly to the provincial militia, stiffened with no more than three battalions of the line. By this means Loudoun was able to provide a striking force of six regular battalions, and an irregular

corps of rangers, numbering in all about 5300 men. By the end of April it was assembled at New York with all the material for a siege, and in order to conceal the enterprise an embargo was laid on outward bound shipping. Till news came of the home contingent and the fleet that was to accompany it, nothing more could be done. In the face of rumours of the French naval concentration, it seemed madness to trust the expedition naked to the sea. The commander-in-chief on the station was Sir Charles Hardy, a young post-captain, who had come out two years before as Governor of New York, and had just been given his flag, for the purpose of the expedition. The squadron at his disposal consisted of but one fifty-gun ship and four small cruisers—a wholly insufficient force to escort the transports to Halifax, till Holburne should appear on the scene.

The inevitable delay was now seriously compromising the prospects of the campaign. Loudoun's idea had been to make himself master of Louisbourg before the end of June, when the St. Lawrence would be free of ice. He would then be able to proceed against Quebec, and thus deal with both places in one campaign.[1] But week after week went by and still there was no tidings of Holburne's coming. By the end of the month both general and admiral lost patience. The season for action was fast passing away; it was neck or nothing, and they determined to take the desperate risk of moving the expedition to Halifax over the uncommanded sea. Accordingly, the first week in June the troops were embarked. Hardy hoisted his flag, and the fleet dropped down to Sandy Hook. But just as they were on the point of sailing a privateer came in with a prize which

[1] "Journal of Lord Loudoun's Intended Expedition, 1757," *Chatham Papers*, vol. 78.

she had captured straggling from a French convoy bound from St. Domingo to Louisbourg under escort of M. de Bauffremont with five of the line. To the British commanders it was a staggering check. Neither could tell what to make of the news, but obviously it was now impossible to sail till they had made sure the course was clear. Hardy therefore sent off two cruisers to report, and a further wait was necessary till they returned.

The fact was that it was just at this moment that the clever concentration of the French was drawing to a head. De Bauffremont, with his five of the line from Brest, was the first to arrive. His cruise had been most successful; for not only had he supplied the French West Indian stations with what they required, but amongst other captures he had taken the *Greenwich*, a British fifty-gun ship of the Jamaica squadron, and still was able to reach Louisbourg with stores and drafts before the end of May. Fortunately he was unable or disinclined for the moment to make any further effort. Hardy's cruisers returned from Halifax to report all clear, and without more ado he agreed with Loudoun to take the risk. On June 20th, therefore, the expedition finally sailed, and by the end of the month was safe in Halifax. Its escape was remarkable, an excellent example of the large possibilities of evasion which are open to a small, well-handled expedition moving in well-judged time. Of the actual risk they had run neither Loudoun nor Hardy had any idea. For not only was De Bauffremont in Louisbourg, but on June 5th there had also arrived the little Toulon squadron which Saunders had fought in the Straits, and on the 20th, the very day the British expedition had sailed from New York, there had appeared De la Motte himself with the main Brest squadron. Thus as Loudoun was making for Halifax the French

admiral had at his disposal a fleet of eighteen of the line and five frigates. Yet, by a law of strategy which appears to be fairly constant, Loudoun's move was practically safe. For experience shows that when so far drawn a concentration as the French had arranged takes place it is always followed by a period of apathy, due partly to the moral reaction after the success of a great and prolonged operation, and partly to the physical preoccupation of refitting the ships and reorganising the various divisions into a single fleet.

At Halifax Loudoun found three regiments of infantry and some artillery, with two small ships of the line and half-a-dozen cruisers, but of Holburne there was still no sign. Presently, however, vessels from his fleet began to straggle up out of the prevailing fogs, and from Louisbourg came in a scout who reported that there were in the port no more than ten of the line and four frigates. At last, on July 9th, Holburne appeared. By the original plan of campaign Louisbourg ought already to have been in their hands, and they should have been starting for Quebec. To take both places was now obviously impossible, and a question arose as to which of them they should strike. The force at their command numbered fifteen of the line, two "fifties," sixteen cruisers, two bomb-vessels and a fire-ship, with three brigades of four regular battalions each and a reserve of two battalions, besides 500 Royal Artillery and 500 Colonial Rangers. Of the strength of the enemy's force at Louisbourg they were not certain, and for some reason it appears to have been thought that another reconnaissance was necessary before they could decide. Captain Rous, the captor of Beauséjour—hitherto the only success of the war—was accordingly despatched with four frigates to look into the place, and while the fleet watered, the troops were

landed to refresh, and were continually exercised in landing and siege operations. It was not till the end of the month, after three precious weeks, that Rous returned with information obtained from a captured smack that there were in Louisbourg ten of the line and a garrison of 3000 men. A joint council of war was called, at which it was quickly decided that Quebec must be given up, as they could not leave such a strength behind them in Louisbourg. Louisbourg, then, must be their objective.

The method of conducting the attack in face of the French fleet, which is said to have been adopted, is worth notice. In order to reduce the risk of passage to the lowest, it was decided that Holburne should go forward with the battle fleet, unhampered by the transports, and endeavour to decoy De la Motte out. The convoy was given an independent escort of eight cruisers, which were also to cover the landing, but they and the army were not to move till the result of Holburne's attempt to get a decision against the French fleet was known. Till then the troops were to remain at Halifax on board the transports, ready to sail at a moment's notice.[1] Such a plan was of course theoretically correct—the idea being that control of the sea should be secured before the army attempted to pass. On the information they had of De la Motte's inferiority it was even pedantically correct, and quite out of tune with the daring movement Loudoun and Hardy had just made. The bolder course of landing the troops under cover of the fleet was hardly beyond fair risk, seeing time was short. What was to happen if Holburne failed to get a decision we cannot tell. All we know for certain

[1] Knox, *Historical Journal*, pp. 19 and 23. Knox is the sole authority for the arrangement, but he was always well informed on such matters.

is that after the council rose the troops were immediately ordered to embark.[1]

Then the movement was suddenly arrested. Rous's information was of course quite inaccurate. De la Motte's fleet was nearly twice as strong as he had reported, and the order to embark had scarcely been given when Loudoun was undeceived. A frigate came flying into the harbour with startling news. It was Captain Edwards of the *Gosport*, who had obtained from a prize taken off Newfoundland a complete list of the French fleet, showing it to consist of eighteen of the line, of which three were of eighty guns. Here, then, was the whole situation radically altered. Instead of having a force to escort his expedition so superior to the enemy's fleet that he was certain to beat them if they ventured to expose themselves to an action, he found himself confronted with the conduct of a combined expedition in the face of an actually superior fleet. He appears to have made up his mind immediately that the operation was no longer justifiable. The failure of the home authorities to cover it by an effective blockade, and the delay which had enabled the French to complete their concentration undisturbed, had completely wrecked his plan of campaign. Without so much as calling a council of war (and for this he was afterwards blamed), he wrote a note to Holburne asking him shortly whether he thought their force "sufficient to attempt the reduction of Louisbourg with any probability of success at this advanced season of the year." The admiral replied: "So far as a sea officer can judge, considering the strength of the enemy and other circumstances, it is my opinion there is no probability of succeeding in any attempt upon

[1] Holburne to Cleveland and same to Loudoun, Aug. 4, *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters*, 481.

Louisbourg at this advanced season of the year." Thereupon Loudoun decided to break up his force, return with the bulk of it to New York, and abandon the operation.[1]

Was he right? No decision of a baffled officer has been more freely ridiculed than this. Yet by all strategical theory he was more than justified. The fault was not his; it was at the door of the home Government, whose delays had altered every factor of the original scheme. We think now that to attempt an oversea expedition of any size in the face of even an inferior fleet is scarcely ever justifiable, and Loudoun had to move between 14,000 and 15,000 men in the face of a superior fleet. The man who, in passing his division from New York to Louisbourg, had shown he knew how to accept a risk, whose whole soul had been wrapped up for months in this child of his own brain, yet did not hesitate a moment to decide that he was beaten. How many officers on our roll of fame would have done otherwise? Some would have sought to snatch a tactical victory from the strategical defeat. Wolfe almost certainly would have tried, and so would Nelson, for the moral effect alone, however small the prospect of success.

In this case victory almost certainly awaited a man who would have greatly dared. De la Motte's fleet was not what it seemed. When Loudoun wrote to Pitt to announce his intention to retreat, he argued correctly enough that with the force at the enemy's disposal they could come out and give Holburne battle, and then, even if he defeated their battle fleet, the transports

[1] Although Instructions at this time contained an article constituting a regular council of war, Pitt's rule was to explain that it was not obligatory to call it at any time but only when the naval and the military commanders-in-chief thought it expedient with regard to any joint operations. See Holburne to Pitt, *S.P. Colonial* (*America and West Indies*), 85, April 25, 1757.

might still be cut to pieces by the French frigates.[1] Holburne was of the same opinion, yet it is very doubtful whether De la Motte was either morally or physically in a condition to play such a part. His orders were characterised with more than usual defensive prudence. His main object, as laid down in his instructions, was "to guarantee the places which the enemy meant to attack." If an opportunity presented itself he might take advantage of the numerical superiority which he was presumed to have over the British, to attack and destroy their fleet, but on the other hand he was cautioned against "compromising the forces which had been entrusted to him, and whose preservation was so essential to the continued existence of the navy."[2] Under these orders De la Motte, after some hesitation, had decided to devote himself and his fleet to the defence of the port. The demoralising effect of such instructions could have no more eloquent example. No admiral could be in a better strategical position for a counter-stroke than he had been at the moment of his timid decision. He was first in the field. He had completed his concentration and had his transports in safety, and was free to fall on Holburne before he joined hands with the New York and Halifax squadrons and while his fleet was still encumbered with the duty of escorting troops. De la Motte, on his arrival, had actually given orders to get ready for sea again with all possible speed, as though resolved to reap the harvest that lay ready to his scythe; but with fifty-nine years of service behind him and sickness raging with increasing intensity in his fleet, his energy gave way, and instead of seizing the magnificent opportunity he had gained, he persuaded

[1] Loudoun to Pitt, Aug. 5, 1757.
[2] Waddington, *La Guerre de Sept Ans*, vol. i. p. 252.

himself it was his duty to remain in harbour and devote his sickly crews to strengthening the Louisbourg fortifications.

That a man of De la Motte's antecedents, an admired pupil of Duguay-Trouin, should make such a mistake was an eventuality on which Loudoun and Holburne had no right to count. Nor was there at that time any justification for taking liberties with such an enemy as the French so far had shown themselves to be. Afterwards it was different, when we had established a moral superiority at sea. But at this time, by every possible calculation, if they proceeded with the operation failure was almost certain, and disaster not unlikely. And we must not forget what disaster and even failure meant. Loudoun's plan of campaign was based on reducing the defence of the British frontier to a tenuity which was only justified by the idea that a rapid *coup de main* on Louisbourg would lay Canada open to attack, and so would prevent Montcalm from moving in any force against our slender frontier guards. Thus failure would have meant a most serious danger to the British American Colonies, and even success would be little better. For success at Louisbourg, won so late in the year, would no longer threaten Canada, and Montcalm might safely seek retaliation in a stunning counter-stroke. All things considered, then, it seems hard to blame Loudoun very severely for his decision to hasten back and make sure of his province. To brand his behaviour as ridiculous is quite beyond the mark. He abandoned his operation only when every condition which justified its inception had given way under his feet, and we may say that nothing but sheer rashness or the highest genius for war would have dared to go on.

As it was the case was bad enough. Montcalm had

seized the chance which the delay of the British expedition gave him. The very day that Loudoun sat down to announce to Pitt his intention to return at once to New York, Montcalm, with an overwhelming force of regulars, militia, and Indians, was surrounding Fort William Henry, our frontier post on Lake George. A week later it fell, and the capitulation was followed by that ugly massacre of prisoners which so deeply embittered the war. From the captured post to Fort Edward on the Hudson was but a step. If attacked it must fall, and Montcalm would have the way open to Albany and New York itself. It was solely the absolute necessity of letting the militia return to gather the Canadian harvest that stopped his advance. As it was he had to content himself with burning the captured fort to the ground, and thus putting himself in undisputed possession of the whole Lake route into Canada.

With this very real disaster to justify Loudoun's anxiety, he cannot be accused of making himself pictures or of not having had a real ground for his anxiety. Whatever his share of the blame, the whole episode affords one of the most interesting strategical problems of the war, and forms an instructive pendant to that which Byng so badly mishandled. The error of Loudoun—if error it was—is scarcely to be compared with that of Byng—for the risk which Loudoun would have run was far greater, and the risk he was entitled to run much less. Byng would have risked no more than his fleet, and even if the French could have destroyed it, there would have been too little left of their own to carry on, as he feared, to Gibraltar. Whereas in Loudoun's case it was not a question of risking a single fleet, but of risking the military force on which our whole position in America depended. Again, as to the degree of risk that

was legitimate in either case, Byng was engaged in a defensive operation—in trying to save a port that was believed to be vital to our naval and political position, and in such a case almost any naval risk is legitimate. Loudoun on the other hand was engaged in an offensive operation, and to abandon it was not to give up anything to the enemy, but merely to resume an expectant attitude till the conditions favourable to the operation recurred. The risk that is legitimate in such a case is small—to be measured not so much by the importance of the object as by the consequences of possible failure.

Loudoun was very harshly judged by Pitt at first, but cooler reflection seems to have mitigated the severity of his opinion. Indeed he himself had been the first to recognise how the French concentration had altered the possibilities of the case. One of his earliest acts when he returned to power in July was to order out a reinforcement of four of the line to enable Holburne to deal with the situation, but it was then too late.[1] Accordingly, though Loudoun was recalled and not employed by Pitt again, nothing worse fell to his lot.

As for Holburne he fared better still: for though he never again flew his flag at sea, he was given the com-

[1] Pitt to Holburne, July 7 and 18—Thackeray, ii. 416. These two letters, which accompanied the reinforcement, are of high interest for Pitt's strategical ideas. The first practically enjoined Holburne to devote his whole attention to destroying the French fleet. He was even to follow it if it returned home. In this order we see the crude idea of command of the sea prevalent. In the second letter Pitt corrects the error, and he subordinates the destruction of the French fleet to the main offensive operation. "For the greater caution and clearness on a point of so much importance . . . you are to consider the conjunct operations of his Majesty's fleet and land forces in North America as the first and preferable service; and that consequently you will not leave those parts with the fleet under your command so long as any of the great objects of these operations . . . may with any prospect of success be pursued." In other words, the French fleet is only to be regarded as his main objective so long as it forms an obstacle to attaining the object of the campaign.

mand at Portsmouth immediately on his return, and held it throughout the war with credit. It was no more than he deserved, for he had certainly done his best to make something out of the unhappy situation. So soon as Loudoun deemed his escort no longer necessary to the retreat of the army he proceeded at once to Louisbourg to endeavour to deal with De la Motte's fleet. He found there only seventeen of the line; for De la Motte, when he determined to remain on a passive defensive, had sent two of them to Quebec. Holburne, though now in more equal force, decided that it was impossible to maintain a close blockade of the place, as the fogs were too bad to permit the fleet to keep together. In consultation with Commodore Holmes, his second in command, he therefore decided to return to Torbay, on the coast of Nova Scotia, and prepare two fireships for an attempt to burn the Frenchmen where they lay. Torbay proved unsuitable, and he had to go back to Halifax. It was already past the middle of September, but still he would not give up. In a few days he was out again, and at once fell in with his reinforcements from home. His hope was to tempt De la Motte out, as the time when he would be forced to sail was rapidly approaching. With this in view he issued two rendezvous to his captains. No. 1 was eight to ten leagues south of Scatary Island, which lies a little to the north-east of Louisbourg, affording a correct position for watching the port. If he was not to be found there, or the French fleet was known to be out, the orders were to follow them or proceed to rendezvous No. 2, fifteen leagues west of Ushant. In this way he hoped to make certain of not missing his prey. On September 24th he had reached, on his way to his first rendezvous, a point some ten leagues south of Louisbourg, when a hurricane of un-

exampled fury fell upon them out of the east and south. On a lee shore, the whole of the fleet seemed doomed. Had it blown in that quarter another hour or two, it is said not a ship could have escaped, but on the following day, in the nick of time, it changed to west of south, and the fleet was saved.[1] Saved, but that was all. Even in Louisbourg harbour the French had suffered severely, and Holburne's fleet was no longer a fighting force. Six of the line were completely dismasted, and he was forced to get back the best way he could to Halifax. De la Motte was left free to come out. This he did so soon as his own damages were made good, and held away to run the gauntlet into Brest. It was only by prodigies of seamanship that the shattered British ships ever reached home. Holburne's success in saving his command, and his dogged pertinacity, were probably what secured him from the resentment of Pitt, and certain it is that his persistence in holding De la Motte so long in Louisbourg led to consequences of considerable importance.

[1] Holburne to Cleveland, Aug. 14, Sept. 17, Sept. 29, Dec. 7; *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters*, p. 481. See also despatches to Pitt in Kimball's *Corr. of William Pitt*, vol. i. pp. 106–11, 114–18, 120, 125.

CHAPTER VIII

INAUGURATION OF PITT'S "SYSTEM"

THE energy which Holburne had been displaying off Louisbourg, though partly due to his own character, was undoubtedly in part the reflection of the new force that was quickening the prostration at home into sudden vigour. "There has been as much business done in the last ten days," wrote Newcastle to Mitchell in Berlin on July 16th, "as in as many months before." The prolonged Ministerial crisis was over, the deadlock was broken, and after interminable negotiations a coalition had been formed between the irreconcilables Newcastle and Pitt. Every one had been obliged to recognise at last that without Newcastle's overpowering Parliamentary interest government was impossible, without Pitt's power of administration it was impotent. So to Newcastle was given the name of Prime Minister, to Pitt the reality. With the control of foreign affairs as Principal Secretary of State he was also to have control of the war. Barrington was to remain at the War Office, but over the Admiralty there was a difficulty. Anson was of the Newcastle-Hardwicke set, and if Pitt was to have control of the navy it seemed scarcely possible to bring him back. Moreover he was still under the cloud which had fallen upon him as the Minister responsible for the Minorca disaster. Still he was Hardwicke's son-in-law, and it was Hardwicke to whom the King had entrusted the desperate task of bringing Pitt and Newcastle to-

gether. Horace Walpole's story is that Pitt cut the knot by nominating Anson himself. "Adjusting their list with Lord Hardwicke," he writes, "Pitt said he missed a very respectable name there which he hoped would be placed greatly—it was Lord Anson's—and he was restored to the Admiralty, whether with more opprobrium to himself, who returned to the Board with Pitt's set, abandoning his own, who had been disgraced with him, or to Pitt, who restored so incapable an object to a trust so wretchedly executed, I am in doubt to determine."[1] Walpole's facts in this case are as untrustworthy as his judgment, but his story is interesting as evidence of the low estimation in which Newcastle's political opponents held one of the greatest naval administrators we ever had. Lord Hardwicke gives a very different version. In the letter he wrote to Anson to inform him of his appointment and of the formation of the new Ministry he tells the whole story. In accepting the King's orders to arrange the coalition, he says he had made it a condition that Anson should be highly placed. In the list that was eventually drawn up Pitt had inserted Legge, his most ardent supporter, for the Admiralty and a peerage. When Hardwicke showed the list to the King he would not hear of it. Whereupon the astute old lawyer let fall Anson's name. "I shall like it extremely," said the King. Newcastle was, of course, delighted, and Pitt, when approached, very readily consented that Legge should go again to the Exchequer, and the thing was done.[2]

There is a story which has passed unquestioned into history that Pitt made it a condition of his accepting office that Anson "should not possess the correspondence," that is, that Pitt should deal with the admirals at sea

[1] *Memoirs of George II.*, vol. iii. p. 32.
[2] Hardwicke to Anson, June 9, *Anson Corr.*, *Add. MSS.* 15,956.

behind the back of the Admiralty, thus reducing the Board to a mere supply department. It is even said that it was his habit to write the admirals' orders himself and insist on the Lords of the Admiralty signing them while his secretary held a piece of paper over the contents.[1] The story is certainly apocryphal and easily to be explained. From the above account of the formation of the Ministry it is abundantly clear that if Pitt did make any such conditions, Hardwicke, who conducted the negotiations, certainly said nothing about them to Anson. There was indeed no necessity for such conditions. The fact that Pitt did constantly act directly without passing his orders through the Admiralty appears to have led to a belief that there was something peculiar, even unconstitutional, in his position. But this was not so. One of the most powerful elements of strength in a fleet is its capacity for stealthiness and secret action. To let every order pass through the Admiralty where it became known to a score of different officials, was to risk this special advantage, and therefore, at least as early as the reign of Anne, it had been the practice for Secretaries of State to communicate instructions for secret expeditions direct to the admirals concerned. These instructions, where any large question of policy was involved, were settled in the "Secret Committee" of the Council, and as the First Lord of the Admiralty always sat upon it the procedure was without danger or offence. The only difference in Pitt's case was that owing to his prodigious power of work he himself quickly absorbed the war functions of the Secret Committee, so that the effect of the arrangement was that Pitt, within the broad lines of the Government's policy, practically exercised the office of First Lord

[1] The story appears to originate with Almon in his *Anecdotes of the Life of Lord Chatham.* See Thackeray, vol. i. p. 293.

while Anson discharged that of First Sea Lord or Naval Chief of Staff, a part which exactly suited his taste and his capacity. But even so, the system of direct communication was rarely, if ever, applied to purely naval operations. Its chief use was for combined expeditions in which an admiral and a general had to co-operate, and it was essential to have one fountain of instructions to co-ordinate their action, as well as to preserve the secrecy which is the soul of such operations. In these cases it was the practice, as always, for an order to issue from the Admiralty and War Office respectively directing the naval and military commanders to obey the directions of the Secretary of State. So soon as the operation was over they were similarly instructed to revert for orders to their respective departmental chiefs. But in all cases, as Pitt afterwards solemnly declared from his place in the House of Commons, he never acted except through the heads of the offices concerned.[1]

In practice the system worked admirably. Indeed the whole direct-acting organisation into which our clumsy constitutional machinery had suddenly been transformed was one of peculiar perfection. In effect, for the purposes of the war, the administration was scientifically separated into a supply department and an executive department, which were kept practically distinct. At the head of the one was the Duke of Newcastle, as First Lord of the Treasury, at the head of the other was Pitt; that is, diplomacy, the army, and the navy—the three executive factors in war—were under his supreme direction, and the great officers in each department were in relation to him as expert advisers. Thus without the preoccupation of supply he was free to co-ordinate the three national forces as completely and harmoniously as a general in the field

[1] See *post*, vol. ii. p. 229.

wields his horse, foot, and artillery. It is for this reason —because on this occasion we had for once an organisation for war which, theoretically at least, could scarcely be nearer perfection—that the progress of the struggle is so well worth patient study, not merely for soldiers and sailors, but for every man who directly or indirectly feels the responsibility of government.

As for the rest of the administration, Fox, who had failed to form a Ministry of his own, was kept quiet by being made Paymaster of the Forces, while Hardwicke, who refused to return to the Woolsack, or to accept any office at all, still placed his long head at the country's service by attending the Secret Committee as a Privy Councillor on important occasions, and being ready at any time to make up the Prime Minister's mind for him. Never has the country, at a great crisis of its existence, been blessed with an administration stronger or more capable than that with which the tact and wisdom of the great Chancellor provided it. "This is the state of the case," he wrote to his son-in-law with pardonable pride, "and when I look back I stand amazed at the sudden change. All our friends are in raptures with it; the Court in general pleased, and the town more so. It is looked upon as the strongest administration that has been formed for many years, and by good conduct may become so."[1]

At the Admiralty Boscawen again weathered the storm. Indeed, in spite of the difficulty of finding room for the friends of both parties, no suggestion of his removal is to be found. Anxious as the Hardwicke and Newcastle set were to find a place for Hawke, it proved impossible. To him, however, was to be confided the first great stroke to retrieve the situation.

[1] Hardwicke to Anson, June 18—Barrow, *Anson*, p. 293.

By this time it was bad enough. During the crisis neglect had gone so far that only an extreme exhibition of energy could save the war from an ignominious collapse. Pitt, however, saw his way clear, if only he could get things done. One of his very first acts had been to write an urgent order direct to Holburne telling him to blockade De la Motte, or on no account to let him get back to Europe. It was of the utmost importance for what he had in hand that there should be no Brest fleet to interfere.

The real tension of the situation lay in the depressing state of affairs in the German theatres of war. There things had been going from bad to worse. The very day on which Hardwicke wrote to Anson to announce the formation of the new Government, Frederick, in making an offensive movement to protect his investment of Prague, had been soundly defeated by Marshal Daun near Kolin. The siege of the city had to be raised, the whole advance into Bohemia was stopped, and all hope of crushing the Austrian army singly was at an end. In view of all the other forces that were converging upon him, Frederick's cause seemed lost. He fell into a state of deep despondency, and was carried so low by despair as actually to authorise his sister, the Margravine of Bayreuth, to sound the French court on the possibility of a separate peace. At the same time he pressed more desperately than ever for British assistance. Smarting under a sense of desertion, he called loudly for the promised fleet in the Baltic; for a subsidy; for anything in fact but silence and indifference. Merciless to Mitchell, he openly bewailed his evil lot in having allied himself to England in her decadence, and drove the unhappy ambassador, who had nothing to answer, to such a state of mind that he begged to be recalled.

Still weeks went by and no assurance came. The Russian fleet put to sea and began to blockade the East Prussian ports; and all the time Frederick's forces were being pressed back out of Bohemia, and the Swedish and Russian invasions were in the act of beginning. The Duc de Soubise had joined the Imperial army on the Upper Rhine and was ready to move; while on the Lower Rhine D'Estrées, having at last got his army into motion, had compelled Cumberland with his inferior force to retire across the Weser. So badly was the retreat conducted that, but for the indiscipline of the raw French troops, Cumberland's army must have been destroyed. The clumsy operation produced the worst effect both upon Frederick and at home. Hardwicke and Newcastle had scarcely the heart to congratulate each other on getting back to power. Newcastle, in thanking his friend for his good offices, declared that a Baltic fleet was now absolutely necessary, for Frederick was calling so loudly for it, and protesting we did nothing for him. Pitt, he naïvely said, must think seriously of foreign affairs, and very differently from hitherto, or Frederick would make a separate peace, and "we shall lose the Electorate this year, and God knows what next." In returning his congratulations, Hardwicke vowed he could not bring himself to speak of the situation at all, so lugubrious and depressing was the outlook in every quarter of the horizon.

As the weeks went by and the new Government was feeling its feet, things only grew still worse. Before D'Estrées attempted to pass the Weser he felt it necessary to secure his extreme left. There, at the mouth of the Ems, lay the Prussian province of East Friesland, with its valuable little port of Emden. It had been well fortified and garrisoned with a militia battalion. Frede-

rick regarded the place as of high strategical importance as forming the connecting link between England and Cumberland's army; and in committing it to the charge of an officer of his own he bade him defend it to the last man. We on our part were about to send a cruiser squadron to assist in its defence. Frederick clutched hopefully at the idea, and begged that we would at the same time insert a notice in the *Gazette* that we were about to send troops too. This, he trusted, would stop France moving against the place.[1] But D'Estrées was equally alive to its value. On June 20th, two days after the Prussian defeat at Kolin, and before our cruiser squadron could arrive, he detached a flying column of some 300 men to surprise it. On July 2nd, when Frederick was calling most fiercely for British help, they appeared suddenly before its walls, and next day the commandant, regardless of Frederick's injunction, surrendered almost without a blow.[2] Thus, just at the time when Cumberland was beginning to add his importunity to that of Frederick for immediate relief, he was cut off from direct communication with England, and there was no way of reaching him except by the distant port of Stade upon the Elbe, in his extreme rear. To make matters worse, this happy movement of the French was accompanied by a similar one to D'Estrées' right, by which he successfully seized Cassel. With both his flanks thus secured, the wary marshal resolved to delay no longer, and under urgent, almost insulting pressure from Paris, he effected his passage of the Weser on July 16th. Cumberland, in spite of Frederick's demands, made no effort to oppose him. He contented

[1] *Politische Corr.*, xv., Frederick to Michel, May 26 and June 9.

[2] *Der Siebenjährige Krieg*, by the German Great General Staff, vol. v. p. 82. Waddington, *Guerre de Sept Ans*, vol. i. pp. 413, 419.

himself with taking up a position covering Hanover, and there D'Estrées prepared to attack him.

Such then was the desperate situation when those ten strenuous days of which Newcastle wrote in astonished admiration came to an end. In that time Pitt had not only made up his mind what to do, but had begun to do it. The politico-strategical problem he had to solve was extremely complex and difficult. With the limited British forces that remained unemployed he had to allay the invasion panic, to put fresh heart into the country, to keep the Louisbourg force covered by occupying the French at home, and finally to assist Frederick and keep him from making peace, and all without violating his public promise that the army should not be sent to serve in Germany. For a moment there seems to have been an idea of despatching ten ships of the line into the Baltic to raise the blockade of Frederick's ports and take possession of the Swedish and Russian sea communications.[1] By June 5th Holderness had written to Mitchell to tell him the project was impossible. Probably it was never seriously entertained, never at least by Pitt. The solution upon which he immediately seized was one which must have been long in his mind, for it was a suggestion which had previously been made to him by Frederick. It was to take a substantial part of the home defence force, which was doing nothing, and get it afloat to threaten the coasts of France. By July 11th, less than a fortnight after the Ministers had kissed hands, Anson was summoning Hawke to London to be told the secret of his command. On the 15th the broad lines of the new policy were settled in the Secret Committee by Pitt, Newcastle, Hardwicke, Holderness,

[1] Abbé de Bernis to Havrincour, July 4, copy in *Newcastle Papers*, 32,872.

and Anson, and with it the answer that was to be sent to Frederick.[1]

As summarised by Newcastle the resolution was that Mitchell was to be told in the greatest secrecy "of the intended expedition to the coasts of France (as formerly proposed by the King of Prussia)." It was to consist of 8000 men and almost the whole home fleet. Nothing, so he was to say, but absolute impossibility would have prevented their sending a squadron to the Baltic. They would not even have ventured to employ the home fleet in the proposed expedition, were it not for the consideration that it would always be at hand in the Channel in case of any attempt upon our own coasts.

In this minute we have the keynote of Pitt's strategy. In technical language it meant that he was determined to keep the home fleet to its true defensive function, that is, as a covering force for the main offensive in America, which would prevent the French thwarting that offensive either by getting reinforcements across the Atlantic or by making counter-attacks at home. At the same time his intention was to make the naval defensive more potent and more active by combining with it a military force and permitting it a minor offensive within the main defensive area assigned to it. It was admirably conceived. It may be laid down as a general principle of strategy that no defensive disposition is perfect unless it threatens or conceals an attack. Pitt's design did both. It threatened, as we shall see, a vast extent of French territory and at the same time concealed the actual direction of the intended attack. The natural effect would be to confuse the French strategy and attract some of their force; and in this way it would release the pressure upon both Frederick and Cumberland, while at

[1] Abbé de Bernis to Havrincour, July 5, *ibid.*

the same time it would actually increase the energy of our home defence. Finally it would produce the moral effect that was so greatly needed, and teach the people it was theirs to strike and not to cower in expectation of a blow.

All this was exactly what was in Frederick's mind. A fortnight before, he had urged it all in an interview with Mitchell. After pointing out the powerful effect a coastal attack must have as a diversion for himself and Cumberland, he went on to say he was of opinion "that England's seeming to act upon the offensive will have a great effect upon the councils of France as well as give a spirit to the English nation, who have hitherto been frightened with vain terrors of invasion, and that the only way to prevent like panic is to show by some vigorous act that you do not fear them."[1]

In the despatch in which Holderness communicated the resolution to Mitchell the new policy was further developed, and it is here we have the fullest extant exposition of what Pitt always referred to as "my system." The expression is as elusive as the "Nelson touch," but Holderness does much to give it tangibility. Towards the end of his despatch he explains "the manner in which the exertion of the natural strength of this country can be rendered most useful to the common cause." "I am convinced," he says, "you will agree with me in one principle, that we must be merchants while we are soldiers, that our trade depends upon a proper exertion of our maritime strength; that trade and maritime force depend upon each other, and that the riches which are the true resources of this country depend upon its commerce. I have already explained to

[1] Mitchell to Holderness, July 5, *S.P. Foreign* (*Prussia*), and *Politische Corr.*, xv. 199.

you the impossibility there is of sending a fleet into the Baltic at the present moment, as also the necessity of having a maritime force upon the several stations mentioned in my letter of the 5th instant; but his Majesty is determined that the fleet intended for the Channel service shall at once be made subservient to the views of defending the British dominions and of protecting trade, and yet at the same time to cover a number of land forces considerable enough to alarm the coasts of France, and to oblige that power to withdraw a great part of the troops intended to annoy the King and his allies in Germany, in order to protect their own coasts from invasion." In these words he formulates the kernel of Pitt's design. Mitchell is then told to communicate it to the King of Prussia, enforcing "the necessity of secrecy upon which all expeditions of this nature entirely depend," and to assure him "he will find more relief from these operations, which may be performed with safety to the King's British dominions, than from the uncertain and precarious efforts of a Baltic squadron." Finally Holderness impressed upon him the fact that for the ultimate object of the war, the forcing of the enemy to do our will, the main offensive operations are the highest consideration. "The distant operations in America," he says, "are of at least as much consequence to what ought to be, and I am persuaded is, the King of Prussia's ultimate end in the measures he has pursued, viz. a safe and honourable peace."

Nothing could be more modern or more scientific. The policy of which the war was the continuation—the emphasised expression—was an American policy, and in America, therefore, the decision must be sought. Pitt's statesmanlike grasp showed him that as clearly as it could be seen by the most advanced disciple of Clausewitz.

To say, as is often said, that his policy was to conquer Canada in Germany is entirely to misconceive it. Years later, when all we aimed at was won, he certainly did use such an expression, but it was in the course of an impassioned appeal to the country to resist the desire of a new King and a new Ministry to desert Frederick after he had served our turn. But as Pitt at the outset viewed the struggle for Empire between France and England, the place which the German theatre occupied was secondary —a containing operation, as we have seen, which had sprung out of the clashing of the two world-wide Empires, and which must be kept always subordinate to the true object. To try to win America in Europe was to play into the hands of France, to let her make of the war something that it was not. By her eccentric attack on Hanover she was seeking a decision away from the right lines of the war, at a point where she could best exert her natural strength. It was our concern—and Pitt emphasised it over and over again—to do no more than hold that attack and force her to waste her strength in the false direction she had chosen.

The difficulties of bringing the new weapon into action were of course enormous. To begin such an undertaking so late in the year was without precedent, but prompt and vigorous action was absolutely necessary. There is a story that Anson at first protested that it was impossible to get transports ready in the time specified, and that Pitt told him that if it was not done he would lay the matter before the King, and impeach him in the House of Commons. The story can hardly be true, but it is quite possible that Anson grumbled, and that Pitt reminded him that his return to office was not intended to put a sponge over the Minorca affair, but to give him a chance of retrieving his reputation. Still it is not to be denied

that Pitt had a very short way with officers that made difficulties.[1]

In spite of Pitt's fiery energy the preparation extended from one month into two—mainly owing, it would appear, to the difficulty Anson had pointed out of providing and victualling sufficient transport. The troops were ready, and in Sir John Ligonier, Pitt, as we have seen, had an instrument for the military part of the business as fine as man could want. For some time, however, it would seem that the accomplished veteran of the old Continental wars was doubtful about the whole design. Pitt had fixed upon Rochefort as the objective. A certain Captain Clarke, who had been there two or three years before, had reported it very weakly defended on the land side, and the place had, as a secondary naval port, the intrinsic value which the objectives of all such operations should possess. In order to get from them their full effect, it is always necessary that they should be directed against something which the enemy cannot afford to lose, otherwise he may ignore them and they will fail as diversions. The selection of Rochefort, therefore, must not be regarded as a precedent for using the army for a naval purpose—that is, to assist the fleet in getting command of the sea. The purpose was primarily military—to relieve the pressure on Cumberland's army. Rochefort was selected not because it was a naval port, but because it was the point of most value to the enemy that was within the scope and range of the British force available.

The urgency of the operation was increasing every day its preparation was prolonged. On July 24th the expected battle between Cumberland and D'Estrées had been fought

[1] The story is in Thackeray's *Life of Chatham*. He also says Anson demanded to know the destination of the fleet, which is certainly false, as Anson was a member of the Secret Committee, and was present when the objective was decided.

at Hastenbeck, and Cumberland had been completely defeated. The Duc de Richelieu, who had arrived to supersede D'Estrées immediately after the victory, proceeded to gather its fruits, and by the first week in August the principal fortresses on the Weser were in his hands. Brunswick had come to terms, the city of Hanover had submitted, and the Hanoverian Government had fled to the sea at Stade. Cumberland had found it impossible to make any firm stand till he reached Verden, the last Hanoverian fortress towards Bremen. There he made a show of holding the line of the Aller, on which river, close to its confluence with the Weser, the fortress stood. This was to abandon the Weser and the capital, and on August 11th Richelieu entered the city of Hanover. Concurrently with these events Frederick had been compelled to withdraw entirely from Bohemia. His headquarters were once more at Dresden, where he was facing the necessity of having to deal with Soubise's army at Erfurt. At the same time the Swedes were in movement in Pomerania, and the Russian invasion of East Prussia was developing. Memel had fallen to the Czarina's fleet, and the troops that had landed there were advancing to join hands with the main Russian army which had pushed across the frontier from Lithuania for the final effort. "This crisis is so terrible," Frederick wrote in the last days of August, "that it can't last much longer. The month of September will decide my fate for the autumn and winter."

Well might Pitt fume at the slowness with which his weapon was being brought into play. But the fact was that, although it had not yet moved, its effect was already being felt from end to end of the French position. It is here lies the great interest of the expedition—to note its effect before ever it had begun to stir. To keep the preparation

of such enterprises secret is as difficult as it is easy to conceal their objective. It is the peculiar advantage of this method of warfare that this is so—for the disturbing effect lies even more in the threat than in the performance.

The knowledge that a conjunct expedition was being set on foot spread rapidly, and the highest French authority says, "Every one of the generals who held commands along the coasts of the Channel or the North Sea felt himself threatened."[1] Richelieu immediately detached a whole regiment to reinforce the garrison of Emden, and even so he could not rest. Having got as far as Hanover, he could not bring himself to advance a step further. The most pressing orders were coming in from Paris, urging him to throw himself at once upon Cumberland, and force him beyond the Elbe; for unless the country between the Weser and the Elbe were occupied that year the whole scheme for making an end of Prussia in the next campaign would break down. But Richelieu made endless difficulties, and stopped where he was. The first three regiments which Pitt wanted for service belonged to the Chatham district. Whether designedly or not, they had been ordered to embark at that port,[2] and Richelieu could not take his eyes off them. "I must confess to you," he wrote to Duvernay, the French War Minister, in reply to the pressure that was put upon him from Paris, "that the English expedition makes me uneasy for East Frisia. Marshal d'Estrées has always been convinced, and has told me so, that the more troops you send there the more you will lose. . . . I feel it would be disagreeable to lose that possession, and then to see the Duke of Cumberland's army reinforced. . . . Moreover, I don't know the English

[1] Waddington, *op. cit.*, p. 462.
[2] Jenkinson to Grenville, July 19, *Grenville Papers*, vol. i. p. 200.

will not attempt a diversion in the Netherlands. All this, I assure you, greatly disturbs me."[1]

That was the second point—the Netherlands. About a week after Anson had summoned Hawke to town, our consul at Ostend had sent over word that the French were about to replace the Austrian garrisons in that port and in Nieuport and Blankenburg, and that a number of battalions, which were then on the march to Richelieu's army, had been recalled to join the army which was being cantoned along the coast.[2]

All along the Channel it was the same. When Duvernay received Richelieu's nervous despatch, he sat down to draw up a strategical memorandum on the whole position. "It appears," he wrote, "that the marshal feels, like every one else, anxiety about the destination of the expedition which is preparing in England. He thinks that its objective is Emden, and that Cumberland will move to meet it by way of Bremen." If he did, so Duvernay thought, it would be a most embarrassing move, as neutral territory would prevent his being followed. His own opinion, however, was that Cumberland would not abandon the part of Hanover which he still held, and that if the expedition was not intended for the French coasts, it would appear at Stade on the Elbe. If so, he considered Richelieu would have to be reinforced.[3]

On August 18th Duvernay felt he could reassure the marshal. By that time the troops of the expedition were at the Isle of Wight, and the fleet and transports at Spithead and Southampton. So Duvernay told him there was no longer much doubt that "the

[1] Richelieu to Duvernay, Aug. 8, *Corr. de Maréchal Richelieu*, 1756–8.
[2] Consul Irvine's report, July 18, *Newcastle Papers*, 32,872.
[3] *Corr. de Richelieu*, 1756–8, Aug. 18.

great embarkation" was aimed at the French coasts, perhaps Brest, but he said the English would find that no easy job, for it was the very place upon which the attention of Versailles was most closely concentrated. Next day, in response to a fresh alarm from Richelieu about Stade, he was told it was not a likely destination, as they had now certain information from London that the three battalions of guards and 4000 horse were not to embark with the expedition. Some movements of these units, which cannot now be traced, had evidently raised an impression, perhaps purposely, that they were to form part of the expedition.[1] Still Richelieu dared not stir. He was being pressed to stretch out his right and seize the important point of Halberstadt. From there it was intended that he should advance in co-operation with Soubise and the Imperialist army, and drive Frederick from Saxony before he could recover his feet. But the anxious marshal continued to cling to his headquarters, and protested that though he had got Brunswick by treaty, and the way was clear to Halberstadt, yet he could not move with the Duke of Cumberland on his flank and the possibility of the English coming to Stade.[2] This was in the middle of August, and the long continuance of the anxiety which Pitt's expedition had raised in the mind of the French generals still further emphasises the ease with which these operations can be manipulated for confusing the enemy. The French, indeed, found themselves in the same uncertain position as did the English in the previous year, when the similar expedition of Richelieu was getting ready to sail from Toulon.

[1] Richelieu to Duvernay, Aug. 12; Duvernay to Richelieu, Aug 18 and 19, *Corr. de Richelieu*, 1756–8.

[2] Richelieu to Duvernay, Aug. 14, *ibid.*

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CHAPTER IX

THE FIRST CONTAINING ATTACK—ROCHEFORT

It was not only in Paris and the French camps that doubt was felt as to the real objective of Pitt's expedition. The uncertainty which prevailed abroad was fostered and accentuated by the uncertainty in London. Until the very last there was a doubt as to whether the expedition would go to Rochefort after all. Some were in favour of answering Frederick's call for troops and a Baltic squadron. The King, as Cumberland's difficulties increased, did all he dared to get the force diverted to Stade; while Newcastle as usual was torn between every plan, and thought all too dangerous to try. Besides his perturbation at the secret overtures which Frederick was known to be making to Versailles, he was seriously alarmed about the French army that was gathering in Flanders. For him the trite old French device was ever fresh. Experience had taught him nothing, and he saw the country once more in jeopardy from invasion. In his opinion, therefore, even if the expedition did not go to Stade, the new danger should forbid its going into the Bay of Biscay, where it might be beyond reach at the critical moment.[1] When Cumberland's defeat at Hastenbeck was known and "Hanover was gone," he grew still more worried as to what should be done. Hardwicke, to whom Newcastle poured out his fears, was scarcely less anxious. He did not believe in

[1] "Consideration for the Meeting on Tuesday," July 24, *Newcastle Papers (Cabinet Memoranda)*, 32,997; Newcastle to Hardwicke, July 25, *ibid.*, 32,872.

the expedition, and yet he considered that it must go forward because Frederick had once asked for it. He feared that in a couple of months the French would have done their business in Germany, and would turn on England. "For God's sake," he wrote, "insist that the troops should be back by the middle of or before the end of September."[1]

As yet none of the old men could have any confidence in Pitt as a War Minister, and it required all his firmness to carry the thing through. Eventually, however, at a full Cabinet held on August 4th all was definitely settled and Pitt's draft instructions to the naval and military commanders approved. But the end was not yet. At the eleventh hour, while the expedition was still unready to sail, news arrived which came within an ace of changing its destination. On August 23rd Richelieu hardened his heart to resume the offensive. Cumberland at once let go his hold on Verden and began to fall back upon the sea at Stade. Richelieu took up the pursuit with all the vigour of which his demoralised army was capable, and it looked as though, unless something were done at once, Cumberland would be driven into the sea, and Frederick be left at the mercy of the coalition that was strangling him. At Spithead lay the means ready to hand. The expedition had not yet sailed, and in one last appeal the old King implored Newcastle to get it diverted to Stade. The Secret Committee was summoned for September 5th, and before it could meet news came of the failure at Louisbourg. So far from shaking Pitt's faith in his system, it only reduced him to one of his darkest and most violent moods of determination. That something must be done to save Cumberland he agreed, and orders were sent to Captain Hyde Parker, who with the belated

[1] Hardwicke to Newcastle, Aug. 4, *ibid.*, 32,872.

cruiser squadron was blockading the Friesland coast, to maintain his station as long as the ice would permit, in order to pass supplies to Cumberland up the Elbe.

Parker's little squadron seemed but a straw in the scale, but Pitt's strategical intuition was again correct. It was all that was required. Richelieu knew well that if Cumberland chose to make a firm stand at Stade, and was supported from the sea so that he could not be starved out, the campaign was as good as lost. The French army was exhausted and demoralised, it was involved in marshy country, in which sickness would soon reduce it to impotence, and under such conditions it was impossible to undertake the siege of a place situated at the extremity of its left flank. If Richelieu did undertake it, his army would be useless for next season's operations; if he did not, he could not carry out the movements on his right on which depended his junction with Soubise and the Imperialists, and the positions essential to the next campaign. The situation presents an excellent example of how embarrassing is the factor of the sea to Continental strategists. Had Cumberland and the Hanoverian Ministers had the needful courage of strategical conviction, this simple expedient of a retreat to the sea, which Richelieu feared, would have brought about a deadlock from which for the French there was no escape, and they would have been compelled to go into winter quarters with the purpose of the campaign unachieved.

But Pitt's clear-headed view did not satisfy the broken-hearted old king. He seems to have been harping on the move which was Richelieu's chief anxiety. He wanted Cumberland to execute an eccentric retreat on Emden; he wanted Hyde Parker to attack the French ships that lay there even in Dutch waters, and Newcastle had to approach Pitt as to diverting the expedition to Friesland.

The result cannot be conveyed more vividly than in the gasps with which Newcastle records the interview in his memoranda. "My discourse with Mr. P. about the expedition. His strong answer. He would defend it with his head. Whoever stopped it should answer for it. That he saw it would not go, but that *he* would not send the King's orders to Sir Edward Hawke. His suspicions of the land and sea officers."[1] In fact it is clear Pitt threatened to resign and throw the whole responsibility of diverting the expedition upon Newcastle. It was more than the Prime Minister could face, and three days later Hawke had hoisted the signal to weigh with his orders unchanged.

As finally directed just a month before, Hawke and his colleague were "to attempt as far as should be found practicable a descent on the coast of France at or near Rochefort, in order to attack and by vigorous impression force that place, and to burn and destroy to the utmost of their power all such docks, magazines, arsenals, and shipping as shall be found there." After this attempt, whether it succeeded or failed, they might try L'Orient and Bordeaux, as being the most suitable objectives; but they were at liberty to operate against any place from Bordeaux to Havre, in order to spread the alarm as widely as possible. The strategical objects of the expedition were clearly laid down for the guidance of the staff. These objects were, firstly, to cause a diversion in favour of the German armies; secondly, to disturb French credit; thirdly, to impair the strength of their navy; and, fourthly, "to disconcert their extensive operations," that is, to confuse their strategy.[2] All the commanding

[1] "Business with Lord Mansfield," Sept. 7, *Newcastle Papers* (*Cabinet Memoranda*), 32,997.

[2] *Court-Martial and Narrative*, 1757 (*British Museum*, 518, E. 19). According to that incorrigible quidnunc Bubb Dodington, he was told that at this Council every one but Pitt was for sending the expedition

officers had attended the Cabinet at which the draft of the Secret Committee had finally been approved—Ligonier as acting head of the army, Hawke and his second in command, Charles Knowles, with Sir John Mordaunt and General Conway, who had been chosen to command the land forces. All appear to have agreed to the feasibility of the plan, though Mordaunt's heart was never really in it.

It was an unfortunate choice, though natural enough. A nephew of the famous Earl of Peterborough, whose brilliance and daring in amphibious warfare had never been surpassed since Drake's time, he had acquired a considerable reputation as a soldier, but was now sixty, and had lost his nerve. Horace Walpole says "he had been remarkable for alertness and bravery, but was much broken in spirit and constitution, and had fallen into a nervous disorder." Pitt had intended the chief command for General Conway, who afterwards became so conspicuous in the political world, but he was then only thirty-five, and the King did not believe in young officers. So Mordaunt had to be appointed. Conway himself had as little belief in the plan of his chief. A quiet, studious man, as his friend Walpole tells us, he was disliked in the service for all his cool valour, his high connections, and polished manners. "Cold in his deportment, and with a dignity of soul that kept him above familiarity, he missed that affection from his brother officers which his unsullied virtues and humanity deserved. . . . Added to these failings he had a natural indecision in his

to Stade, whereupon Pitt insisted that minutes of the meeting should be taken and his dissent entered, "upon which the others desisted." The story of this threat to appeal to the country is probably untrue. No evidence of it appears in the *Newcastle Papers*, and Horace Walpole says: "The procrastinators in the Cabinet had but too lately felt his fire to oppose what they saw was a favourite plan."

temper, weighing with too much minuteness and too much fluctuation whatever depended on his own judgment." Out of the service he was as generally popular as he was unpopular in it, particularly with the politicians and intellectuals, so that eventually, in spite of a record barren of achievement, he rose, after being disgraced by George the Third for his votes in Parliament, to the rare position of Commander-in-Chief with a seat in the Cabinet. For quartermaster-general or chief of the staff they had the most accomplished young soldier in the service. This was Colonel James Wolfe, then just thirty, but already widely known for his system of infantry manœuvres — "a young officer," so Horace Walpole describes him at this time, "who had contracted a reputation from his intelligence of discipline and from the perfection to which he had brought his regiment. The world could not expect more from him than he thought himself capable of performing." He had served on Mordaunt's staff as his brigade-major in the late war, and had recently been rejected by his chief's niece. His capacity as a staff officer had just been recognised by his appointment as quartermaster-general in Ireland. The son of a distinguished general of marines, there was perhaps bred in him a sense of the inherent unity of land and sea warfare. Certainly no man ever had a better grasp of it, and this expedition was the seed of experience which his scientific and studious habit of thought was to ripen to so full a maturity. Wolfe is the soldier most closely associated in popular imagination with the glory of Pitt as a War Minister, and certain it is that he was the thorough and sagacious exponent of Pitt's central idea.

What Wolfe's view of the prospects of the expedition was at this time we do not know. In spite of a complete

report of the distribution of the French army, which showed there could not be more than 10,000 men on the whole four hundred miles of coast from St. Valery to Bayonne, and very few even of those at Rochefort, Mordaunt continued nervous and apprehensive.[1] Hawke had been telling him that it was often days before you could get into the Basque Roads where Rochefort lay, if the weather were unfavourable. So he wrote to Pitt to know what was to be done if they found they had alarmed the coast before they could land, and for answer he got a reprimand to the effect that it was his business to decide such a question on the spot. Then he went to Ligonier. There he fared little better, though he did elicit from him a paper of "hints" in which that fine old soldier laid down some highly valuable principles for the conduct of such expeditions. Mordaunt was told firstly that something must be left to chance; for it was impossible to give definite orders when neither the country nor the enemy's force were accurately known. Then Ligonier

[1] Beatson, vol. ii. p. 66. "Memoir sur la force actuelle de France, &c.," dated July 18, 1757, *Court-Martial*, pp. 26–8. Beatson gives the actual distribution of the French army as follows:—

In Germany (armies of Richelieu and Soubise)	119,000
North America and West Indies	25,000
East Indies	4,000
Western Coast (St. Valery to Bayonne)	10,000
Northern and eastern frontier garrisons from Calais to Provence	29,000
Total	187,000

The "Memoir" as presented to the court-martial is slightly different. It gives the total French troops employed as 160,000. Details of the garrisons left in France were: from Sedan to Switzerland, 40,000; from St. Valery to the Duchy of Berg (that is, along the coast of Picardy through Flanders to the Rhine), 20,000; which it was calculated left no more than 10,000 between St. Valery and Bordeaux. It was stated at the trial that both Cabinet and officers had attached the greatest importance to this memoir.

proceeds to lay down the objects of the operation, as though to teach him how to think out such an operation. "If I am rightly informed," he says, "the great point his Majesty has in view by this expedition and alarming the coasts of France is the hope of making a powerful diversion in favour of H.R.H. the Duke, as well as the King of Prussia, who desires and presses much this very measure. . . . A project of giving a mortal blow to the naval power of France is also in his Majesty's thoughts." Then as to the risk that was justifiable to take he says, "You must weigh the advantages that may accrue from success against the damage consequent on repulse." Surprise on arrival, he reminds him, is not absolutely necessary to the success of a *coup de main*, and quotes cases of successful surprises effected long after the operations had begun, concluding with the citadel of Port Mahon, which had been surprised the previous year after a siege of fifty-four days.[1] The dictum is well worth noting, and Wolfe proved its value two years later at Quebec.

As for the naval officers, Hawke, though he retained the confidence of men like Anson, had been unlucky in the war so far, and had hardly sustained his previous reputation. Walpole thus gives the talk of the town about him and his colleagues. "Sir Edward Hawke," he says, "commanded the fleet—a man of steady courage, of fair appearance, and who even did not want a plausible kind of sense; but he was really weak and childishly abandoned to the guidance of a Scotch secretary. The next was Knowles, a vain man, of more parade than real bravery." Still Sir Charles Knowles, in the late war, had

[1] *Report of the General Officers appointed . . . to inquire into the Cause of the Failure of the late Expedition*, p. 20 (*Brit. Museum*, E. 2050 (1758)).

had considerable experience of this kind of work under Vernon upon the Spanish Main, though the action he fought in the West Indies was chiefly conspicuous by the crop of courts-martial and duels that it produced. "Howe," Walpole proceeds, "brother of the lord of that name, was the third on the list. He was undaunted as a rock, and as silent; the characteristics of his whole race. He and Wolfe contracted a friendship like the union of cannon and gunpowder." But here Walpole was mistaken. It was Brodrick, not Howe, who was really in the third post. Howe was only commanding a ship of the line. Amongst the other captains was Keppel; and Rodney, so soon as he knew the design was Pitt's, had also got himself included, in order, as he said, "to contribute something to make his administration what I most sincerely wish it to be."[1]

The cause of the final delay which had so nearly led to the diversion of the expedition to Stade or Emden, had been caused mainly by the insufficiency of transport. The amount required had been calculated on the regular basis of one ton per man. This had been the rule since the period of our Continental wars began with William III. With the Elizabethans, where expeditions were usually of the nature of the one in hand, the regulation had been two tons per man, and Hawke had to point out the difference between what was good enough for the mere transport of troops to Holland, and what was required for a distant combined expedition. The Government was displeased but convinced, and the transport was increased. The expeditionary force, besides two newly-raised raw battalions of marines, consisted of ten battalions of the line, each completed to 700 men, a troop of light horse, and two

[1] *Memoirs of the Reign of George II.*, vol. iii. pp. 46 *et seq.* Rodney to Grenville, Sept. 23, *Grenville Papers*, vol. i. p. 207.

companies of field artillery, a total which represented about one-fourth of the infantry strength allotted to the defence of Great Britain.[1]

The proportion of the home defence force which Pitt permitted himself to place in this condition of high activity as a defensive diversion is not the only point to notice about the strength of this expedition. Its actual numbers are equally significant. It was well under 10,000 men—that is, it was well within the figure which modern strategists usually adopt as indicating approximately the limit permissible in such operations. For a diversion to be strategically legitimate it must operate so as to "contain" or attract to it an opposing force greater than its own. The smaller the raid, the more likely is it to do this. For, as Clausewitz puts it, 50,000 men can defend a province against 50,000, but a thousand cannot defend it against a thousand. In other words, so long as the operation remains a raid and does not exceed the limits of a pure defensive diversion, so long will it retain the special advantage of the defensive—it will be a strong form of war requiring a superior force to deal with it. It is of course impossible to draw anything but an arbitrary line. Still it is none the less a fact that there is a point where a counter-attack will begin to rise above the proportions of a defensive diversion, and to assume the proportions of a true eccentric attack, a point, that is, where it tends to become an offensive movement, with all the weaknesses of the offensive, and its operations are liable to be frustrated by a smaller force than its own. The reason for this appears

[1] The War Office "Establishments" for 1757 show thirty-nine battalions at home at this time, besides the three regiments of guards, forty-two regiments of cavalry, and forty independent garrison companies of "invalids."

to be that in proportion as such an expedition rises in strength so it loses the advantages of rapidity, secrecy, and surprise; the objectives at which it is likely to aim become fewer and consequently more easily determined; and thus those special advantages, which are the peculiar strength of the counter-attack, fall from it, and it becomes tainted with the inherent weaknesses of a true attack. This tendency becomes more obvious and pronounced when such oversea expeditions rise still higher in the scale—when, that is, they begin to pass beyond the limits of eccentric attacks, and to enter the third category of true invasions. The dividing line in this case is usually taken at about 50,000 men, at which point the operation acquires the character and demands all the relative strength of an undisguised strategical offensive. In endeavouring to form a judgment of the correctness of Pitt's combined operations it is always necessary to keep in mind this threefold division. It was recognised by the Elizabethans, who divided all oversea attacks above the category of mere raids into "incursions" and "invasions." It is also recognised by our latest authorities to-day.[1]

But the special point that has to be dwelt upon is that the lines to be drawn between the three categories, though indistinct, are not merely arbitrary, and that they mark actual vital changes in the essential character of the

[1] See particularly Sir John Ardagh's evidence before the Royal Commission on the Militia and Volunteers of 1904, where he adopts the classification: 1, raids, not exceeding 10,000 men; 2, small expeditions, not exceeding 50,000 men; 3, dangerous invasions, up to 150,000. Clausewitz did not clearly enunciate the classification, but tangled himself in an attempt to distinguish between large and small diversions, and was landed in confusion. But this was the most unfinished part of his great work, and had he lived to revise it, he would probably have seen that his difficulty arose from not having observed that when he is speaking of "large diversions," what he really means is "eccentric attacks."—*On War*, book vii. ch. xx.

operation. The minor category—the raid—is essentially a defensive operation, and if used otherwise or with higher intention is false strategy. The middle category—eccentric attack—though it may have a defensive intention, will nevertheless necessarily partake of the offensive. Unless we seek to acquire some definite point from the enemy and to hold it, in order to set up a permanent diversion, the eccentric attack should not be used. A raid would serve equally well; two raids would serve much better. The distinction between these two forms of operation and all that it involved was also understood and clearly formulated by the Elizabethans as their judgment ripened with the rich experience of the great Spanish War. In the eyes of the scientific officers who surrounded Essex in 1596 the expeditionary force of that year was too great for the mere raid, which had been assigned for its object. "But," as the young general wrote, "to have made a continual diversion, and to have left as it were a thorn sticking in his foot, had been a work worthy of such a Queen and of such a preparation."[1] To translate what was in the mind of Essex and his staff into modern phraseology we should say that the simple diversion by raid is a purely defensive operation—preventive and negative in its essential intention, and therefore strong enough in form to require a comparatively small force for its success, since it relies for its effect mainly on the "surprise" advantage of a true defensive counter-attack. The complex or "continual" diversion, on the other hand, is primarily offensive in its action in that it is based on an operation whose intention is positive—to acquire and hold enemy's territory. It involves a regular eccentric attack, and being to that extent a true offensive operation, it has to that extent

[1] See *Successors of Drake*, pp. 34–5.

to rely more upon its intrinsic strength than upon surprise.[1]

Judged then by the most fastidious science, Pitt's expedition to Rochefort was absolutely correct, and bore with it all the elements of success. Had the officers in command been sufficiently instructed in the higher parts of their profession, they would probably have proceeded with more confidence than they did. As it was, the military officers at least approached their objective with a firm conviction that the whole conception was unsound, and that they were doomed to failure by the fantastic presumption of an ignorant civilian. In any case they believed it was too late in the season to succeed, and during their long detention at Portsmouth they had openly talked the whole thing down.[2] Even when they did at last get to sea, fogs and baffling airs so seriously delayed the voyage that it was September 20th before they sighted the entrance to the Basque Roads, between the islands of Rhé and Oléron. By the unhappy clause which Hardwicke had got inserted in their instructions they were to be back in England by the end of the month. In this proviso the two generals saw their chance of forcing Hawke to abandon the attempt altogether. "The generals Mordaunt and Conway," so Hawke wrote to Pitt when all was over, "before we reached the place of our destination, began to think it too late to undertake anything. The consideration of our detention in England, the warning the enemy had to prepare for our reception, and our almost total ignorance

[1] An excellent example of the distinction is afforded by our two operations against America in 1812. That against Washington was in force and intention a pure defensive raid; that against New Orleans, which we intended to hold, was an eccentric attack.

[2] Newcastle to Hardwicke (on Anson's authority), Sept. 3, *Newcastle Papers*, 32,873.

of the coast we were to attack, confirmed them in their opinion that it was most advisable to return to Britain without risking any attempt, and in consequence they urged me to assemble a council of war for that purpose. In my opinion a council of war can neither excuse nor exculpate a commanding officer in breaking through his master's orders, and therefore I refused their request, till I was urged under the article to co-operate in all things with the generals of the troops. On this I declared to them that if I did consent to assemble a council of war I would steadily adhere to my resolution of not returning till we had seen and tried our object."[1]

Every one now will admire the sturdy resolution of the admiral as much as they will condemn the extraordinary conduct of his halting colleagues. Yet in justice to all it must be said that Hawke in this letter does not state the whole of the case. He omits to record facts which were probably at the bottom of the generals' backwardness and of his own irritation. It had always been Drake's golden rule on these occasions to go in head down without a pause, and at almost any risk—surprise and an intimidating impetus being recognised by him as nine-tenths of success. Hawke, in his official despatch written off Rochefort, says that on his arrival he did there and then attempt to get in. Wolfe was of opinion that there was some unnecessary delay. "I have found out," he wrote in rehearsing to a friend the lessons of the expedition, "that an admiral should endeavour to run into an enemy's port immediately after he appears before

[1] Hawke to Pitt; Spithead, Oct. 21, *Chatham Papers*, vol. 78, three sheets holograph. The letter was written by Hawke to justify his conduct when, on his return, he was ordered to sea again, and knew an inquiry was to be held in his absence. It was not, however, produced at the inquiry or subsequent court-martial, and consequently has remained unknown to historians.

it." We might well believe that Wolfe's criticism arose from a landsman's failure to appreciate the naval difficulties, did we not know that Hawke was certainly under a misapprehension as to the danger of the operation.

Inside the Roads, where they narrow down into the estuary of the Charente (on which Rochefort stands), lay the small island of Aix. This was an integral part of the naval port. For so shallow was the river that ships of the line could not come down from Rochefort with their stores and armament on board. These had to be taken in at Aix. The island was consequently fortified, and to the best of Hawke's information the batteries commanded the anchorage. The French charts which he had were apparently misleading, and the general ignorance of this famous road—famous and constantly resorted to by English ships ever since the palmy days of Rochelle—seems to have been as profound as it was inexplicable. It was afterwards found that the road was much larger than they thought, and that as for the Aix batteries they were nothing more than two seventy-fours could knock to pieces in half-an-hour. The Huguenot pilot Hawke had with him had told him as much.[1] Had he gone in as Drake went into Cadiz, he would have found this out for himself, but as it was, whether Wolfe is right or wrong, he certainly did take wholly unnecessary precautions. "I attempted," he wrote in his despatch, "to get into Basque Roads, and made dispositions for attacking the Island of Aix with the Red division, composed of the *Magnanime*, *Barfleur*, *Neptune*, *Torbay*, and *Royal William*," that is, with two nineties, an eighty-four, and two seventy-fours, besides "frigates, bomb-vessels, fireships, and cutters." This formidable force appears to have formed an advanced squadron under Sir Charles

[1] *Proceedings at the Court-Martial.*

Knowles. At all events he led the way with instructions that if the admiral found wind and weather favourable to enter the Roads and attack Aix, he would make a signal for him to do so.

After closing up his fleet on the evening of the 19th, Hawke, at four o'clock next morning, began the final approach. He was still, however, farther away apparently than he thought, and about noon he ordered Knowles to proceed ahead with his division. It was not till past two that he made the land. Soon after this, as he was making for the Antioche Passage, a French two-decker blundered into the fleet. Seeing her mistake, she made all sail away, and Knowles, after some hesitation, ordered Howe in the *Magnanime* to chase her. As Hawke came up and saw what was going on, he confirmed Knowles's signal and ordered other vessels to join the chase, which they did till they hustled the Frenchman into the Garonne. Hawke afterwards said he permitted this because he saw it was impossible to get into the Roads that night. We must take Hawke's word that it was so; but if this acquits him of having hesitated at the critical moment, it convicts him of having timed his approach badly. There is no suggestion the wind was not fair, and what Wolfe's criticism probably meant was that Hawke should either not have shown himself at all that day or else gone in head down regardless of the dark, as Drake did at Cadiz. It is indeed difficult to avoid the impression that in the handling of the fleet at this time there was to some degree a lack of that hardness of grip, that directness of aim, that colour of audacity which are the soul of such operations.

On the following day the attempt to enter the Roads was renewed, but owing to the wide chasing that had been permitted, the Red Squadron was short of three

ships of the line, and the admiral considered it necessary to fill their places before the movement was commenced. At seven in the morning he made the preconcerted signal for Knowles to go in and attack the Isle of Aix, but as he approached the entrance of the passage his pilots lost their heads, a slight haze prevailed, and they refused to take the ships in. The error of letting the *Magnanime* chase was now glaringly apparent. Howe, as leader of the fleet, had on board Thierré, the Huguenot pilot, on whose local knowledge the whole enterprise had been framed. It was not, therefore, till the afternoon, when the *Magnanime* had rejoined and could resume her station in the line, that the movement could be resumed. The consequence was that before it could be completed the wind dropped and the tide turned. The whole fleet had to anchor in the Antioche Passage, and another day was lost.

It was while this was going on that the generals proposed their council of war. The fleet had been two days off the coast spreading the alarm, and the contingency had arisen which they had most seriously apprehended when they had applied for further instructions and got rapped over the knuckles by Pitt. To do anything worth doing and be back by the end of the month was further out of the question than ever. All the more credit, it must be said, to Hawke for sticking to his guns. On the third morning, while he waited for the generals' answer to his last communication, he made a fourth attempt to get in, but it fell calm again and he failed. Fortunately, however, before Mordaunt had made up his mind to insist on the council of war, the *Viper* sloop came into the fleet with despatches from Pitt extending their time. The ground was thus cut from under the generals' position, and in the afternoon Hawke made his

fifth attempt. This time he succeeded, but not till nine o'clock and it was too late to do anything.

When day broke it was seen that the Roads were far larger than had been thought, and that the whole fleet could ride there out of reach of any battery. Still it was considered that no troops could be landed with safety till Aix had been reduced. Accordingly, about ten o'clock, Knowles's division weighed on the flood, Howe in the *Magnanime* again leading. It was not till noon that he was even within range, and the fort opened. Howe did not answer with a single gun, but led on in silence for nearly another hour, until shortly before one his Huguenot pilot brought him up within forty yards of the fort. His second, the *Barfleur*, did the like, and by a quarter to two the fort had surrendered.[1]

It would have been thought that the discovery of how greatly they had over-estimated the difficulties of the task might have given prudence a little rein. Rodney and most other people fully expected the troops to be landed that night or next morning. But it was not so. "That afternoon and night," as Wolfe afterwards wrote, "there slipped through our hands, the lucky moment of surprise and consternation among our enemies." The moment the flag of the Aix fort was hauled down he had gone ashore to reconnoitre, and climbing one of the shattered bastions, had convinced himself that all that was wanted was one quick and resolute stroke. And he was absolutely right. It is usually said in our histories that the French expected the expedition and were ready to meet it. It was not so. The latest and most exhaustive examinations of the French archives show clearly

[1] Rodney to Grenville, *Grenville Papers*, vol. i. p. 207. The French account says that the raw gunners were so much intimidated by Howe's conduct that they lay down flat on their faces beside the guns, and could not be induced to rise. See *post*, p. 215, *note* 2.

that the surprise was complete. A few Colonial infantry and Swiss were all M. de Langeron, the commandant of the district, had to throw into Fort Fouras, the work which defended the mouth of the river. For the rest there was nothing but invalids and untrained militia—"caricatures of soldiers," he pleasantly called them. Defence was regarded as out of the question, and the authorities in Rochefort concerned themselves solely with saving their papers and personal effects.[1] "We feared," wrote an eye-witness, "with reason and with dread, that they would attack at Fouras and enter the river, where the defences were not yet organised. If they had taken this line we had been lost past remedy, and it would have been all over with the port of Rochefort."[2]

This was exactly the line of attack which Wolfe proposed to the generals that evening as the result of his reconnaissance. He suggested further that it should be supplemented by a diverting demonstration of the fleet against Rochelle.[3] This, too, had always been an essential factor in Drake's method, and had it been done it would certainly have completed the panic and confusion that were paralysing the defence ashore. Hawke, however, did not approve the diversion, but the proposal to attack Fort Fouras he received with ardour. He said he would bombard the place in the morning, and immediately ordered up the bomb-vessels. Knowles had received orders to

[1] See Lacour-Gayet, *La Marine Militaire sous Louis XV.*, 1902, p. 307; Waddington, *op. cit.*, vol. i. p. 748; Duke of Devonshire to Holderness, March 25, 1858; *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters* (*Sec. of State*), 4122; *Memoirs du Duc de Luynes*, vol. xvi. p. 201, where he puts the total available force at 3000.

[2] "Sommaire de ce qui s'est passé pendant l'apparition et le séjour de la flotte Anglaise . . . sur les côtes d'Aunis et de Saintonge depuis le 20 Sept., jusqu'au 2 Oct. 1757," edited by Tulau, *Revue Maritime et Coloniale*, 1892, tom. cxiv. p. 111.

[3] *Court-Martial*, Evidence of Wolfe.

reconnoitre the place so soon as Aix fell, but Hawke, fearing his hands would be full, sent off Brodrick, his rear-admiral, and three captains to find a landing-place. Neither Wolfe, the quartermaster-general, nor a single military officer accompanied them, because, as Mordaunt afterwards lamely explained, he considered that the arrangement of the landing-place was sailors' business. So completely had all the old lessons been forgotten, and so widely had the two services drifted apart![1]

It was not till the afternoon of the following day that Brodrick and his captains returned. Their report was favourable. In Chatellaillon Bay, a little to the north of Fouras, Brodrick had found a place where he said he could land without wetting his shoes. "I thought they would do it," wrote Hawke, "the moment they heard my report," and he ordered the transports to get as close inshore as they could. But he had not yet fathomed the ingenuity of men determined to do nothing. Instead of acting at once, the generals called a council of war for the next morning, the 25th. Here, hour after hour, they debated whether Rochefort had a wet ditch or a dry one, and whether or not it could be taken by escalade. On the information which they had they decided the ditch might be wet, and in that case an escalade would probably fail. Thereupon, falling back on the "hints" Ligonier had given them, they asked Hawke if he could undertake to secure their retreat absolutely. As a seaman he replied that he could not bring troops off in a storm and heavy surf. Whereupon the generals promptly decided not to attempt Rochefort at all. They were fortified in their resolution by the failure of Hawke's attempt to bombard Fouras, owing to the vessels detailed taking the ground. Yet, while this miserable vacillation

[1] *Inquiry*, Mordaunt's answer to the Duke of Marlborough.

was going on, in which no thought seems to have been given to the fears of the enemy, the fruit lay ripe for them to pluck. As the French saw the transports moving in, so our eye-witness tells us, the panic which had been growing from day to day reached its extreme. They saw the nine largest ships of the line off Aix, while the rest were spreading in line along the Platin d'Angoulins. The vessels at Aix they thought would bombard the forts as the spring-tide made, while from the rest the troops would be landed; and they gave themselves up for lost. Yet nothing happened, and their amazement brought a return of confidence. The next three days were full spring-tides, the weather was perfect, the moon at its greatest brilliance, yet not a single movement was made by night or day.

The unanimous decision of the council of war not to attempt the capture of Rochefort was signed by Hawke. But, as he afterwards explained, he did so as a matter of form. "In confidence of their judgment and knowledge of their own profession," he says, "we assented to their reasons for not proceeding to take Rochefort by escalade." "However," as he afterwards explained, "though he assented to their not landing upon that footing, he did not give in his opinion that the troops should not land at all for any attempt."[1] What was in his mind was certain remarks which the generals had made when, before sailing, he and they had been summoned to meet Pitt, Anson, and Ligonier at Holderness's house. On that occasion Pitt, as Hawke reminded him, had asked the generals their opinion on the point, and they had replied that though escalade was improper, yet the enterprise was easy, and that by one method or another

[1] Burrows, *Life of Hawke*, p. 145. Rodney says he took the same view. Rodney to Grenville, Oct. 21, *Grenville Papers*, vol. i. p. 218.

they would take the place.[1] What he now expected was that they would at least make an attempt to destroy the docks and arsenal, and the ships that lay in the river.

The matter could not rest where it was. The feeling in the army was as fiercely exasperated as in the fleet, and after two days of vain discussion Mordaunt found himself compelled to call another council of war to reconsider the question of landing. Hawke consented to attend with his staff, but his behaviour was not without blemish. He declared that he was as strongly as ever of opinion that a landing should be made, but that as to what the troops should attempt it was a question for the military officers; he was no judge of land operations; he would not presume to interfere, but was ready, in complete confidence in his colleagues' judgment, to carry out to the utmost of his power any resolution they came to. He then withdrew with all the naval officers. This was not the way to heal the breach, and by the canons of amphibious warfare it was flat heresy. It cannot even have been justified by the traditions of the service, bad as they had grown, or Hawke would have done the same at the first council of war, but that one he had sat out while the military question was discussed. His provocation was no doubt great. It may excuse but it cannot justify his attitude. As a precedent it cannot be too firmly condemned. It is of the essence of conjunct expeditions that councils should be conjunct. However hard we may try to separate the naval from the military part, there is never for a moment any security that a measure or movement expedient for the one branch does not clash with the exigencies or limitations of the other. The naval and military staffs must work like the two lobes of one brain,

[1] Hawke to Pitt, Oct. 21, *Chatham Papers*, 78.

each self-contained and instinct with its own life and law, yet inseparable from the other; neither moving except by joint and unified impulse. It is for this reason that in our service, above all others, soldiers must make themselves, as far as possible, judges of sea operations, and seamen judges of land operations. Without such sympathy of action there can be no true unity of counsel, and combined expeditions will remain what that of Rochefort declared itself more and more to be—merely an army carried by a fleet.

At the council the generals, unable to hold back any longer against the angry feeling of both services, decided to land that very night. Hawke and his officers were only too ready to second the effort; but here arose the kind of difference of opinion which is sure to result from operations not jointly planned. Hawke was for ordering all the frigates and transports to work in as close as possible to the point chosen for landing. To this the generals objected, on the ground that it would reveal their intention to the enemy. Here the soldiers were probably right. It was reasonable to suppose that by this time considerable force would have been collected to oppose them, and as a matter of fact there were now in and around Rochefort some 8000 troops of all kinds. Added to this consideration the British had only boats enough to land half their force at the time, and they were therefore not likely to succeed if they concentrated the attention of the enemy on the point they aimed at. In a true conjunct council all this would have been considered in a proper spirit, and the sailors might easily have devised a way, as Drake and his fellows always did, of concealing the direction of the attack. As it was, Hawke could do nothing but abandon his idea in deference to the valid military objection, and he left

the frigates and transports where they were. The result was deplorable, and no better example could be wished for of the vicious separatist method of co-operation between the two heads of a combined force.

Hawke committed the dispositions for the landing and the command of the flotilla to Brodrick. Mordaunt, on the other hand, determined to lead the first division in person—a resolution which was as creditable to his courage as it was derogatory to his generalship. At dark the troops began to take their places in the boats. Let Mordaunt himself tell what followed. "About one o'clock," he says, "the grenadiers and a great part of the troops who were to land with me in the first embarkation were on board; when, a strong wind blowing from the shore, the officers of the navy appointed to conduct the landing represented that it was with difficulty the longboats could make way; that it would be day before the first embarkation could get ashore; and that it would be five or six hours more before the troops first landed could be supported by a second embarkation. Add to this that the boats belonging to the transports would scarce be able to get ashore at all. For these reasons the generals found the forces could not be landed that night." They told Brodrick they would wait till daylight, when they could have a full view of the ground they were to land on. So, amidst curses and imprecations on their commanders, the troops were ordered into the ships again, and at daybreak Conway and Wolfe were sent away to make yet another reconnaissance.

At this new delay Hawke lost all patience. "Sir," he wrote to Mordaunt, "should the officers of the troops have no further operation to propose considerable enough to authorise my detaining the squadron under my command longer here, I beg leave to acquaint you that I intend to proceed to England without loss of

time." Nothing could be worse. With a fatal cut he finally divided "the squadron under my command" from the troops it carried. In vain Mordaunt begged for a joint council to consider his letter. Hawke again refused, on the ground that he was no judge of land operations. There was but one course for Mordaunt. "Sir," was his reply, "upon receipt of your letter I talked it over with the other land officers who were of our council of war, and we all agree in returning directly to England."

So the affair ended, and probably it was as well it did. With the two chief commanders standing upon such relations as these letters reveal, combined action, in the sense that gives combined action its peculiar strength, was no longer possible. They stayed only long enough to complete the destruction of the works at Aix, and then went home with nothing more for their pains but local knowledge, that was to be turned ere long to good account, and a bitter lesson that was the beginning of better things.

Amidst all the recrimination that followed there stands out one golden utterance that cannot be passed by. It is from the pen of Wolfe, who, gathering from the failure all the lessons it could teach, laid them quietly to his heart and wove from them, to his lasting honour, the reputation of being the greatest master of combined warfare the world had seen since Drake took the art from its swaddling-clothes. Neither at the official Inquiry, nor at Mordaunt's court-martial that followed it, did a word fall from his lips to show how clearly he saw the shortcomings of his chiefs. It is only in the private outpouring of his heart to a friend that we know how deeply they had scored his mind.

"I have found out," so his criticism began, "that an admiral should endeavour to run into an enemy's port immediately after he appears before it; that he should anchor the transports and frigates as close as he can to

the land; that he should reconnoitre and observe it as quickly as possible, and lose no time in getting the troops ashore; that previous directions should be given in respect to landing the troops and a proper disposition for the boats of all sorts, appointing leaders and fit persons for conducting the different divisions." Then follow the memorable words in which his genius sums up the high lesson it had learnt. "Nothing," he continues, "is to be reckoned an obstacle to an undertaking of this nature which is not found to be so on trial; that in war something must be allowed to chance and fortune, seeing that it is in its nature hazardous and an option of difficulties; that the greatness of an object should come under consideration as opposed to the impediments that lie in the way; that the honour of one's country is to have some weight, and that in particular circumstances and times the loss of a thousand men is rather an advantage than otherwise, seeing that gallant attempts save its reputation and make it respectable, whereas the contrary appearances sink the credit of a country, ruin the troops, and create infinite uneasiness and discontent at home. The famous council sat from morning till late at night, and the result of the debates was unanimously not to attack the place they were ordered to attack, and for reasons that no soldier will allow to be sufficient."[1]

It would be impossible to measure with more masterly succinctness the sacred principles, both practical and moral, which should govern such an expedition. The whole is a priceless document, coming as it does from the hand of one who was to carry those principles to such glorious fruition; and every commander to whom such operations are committed might do worse than lay it under his pillow.

[1] Wright's *Life of Wolfe*, p. 397.

CHAPTER X

THE FRENCH ECCENTRIC ATTACK—KLOSTERZEVEN AND EMDEN

At home hopes had beat high. News of the easy capture of Aix had raised cheery expectations which were the only bright spot in the deepening gloom both at home and abroad. The attempt to put the new Militia Act into operation had led to riots all over the country. The lists were forcibly taken from the magistrates, and the lords-lieutenant went in fear of their lives. The "Blues" had been sent down to Bedford to save the Duke. The Speaker Onslow was practically besieged in his own house at Imber Court, and forced, like the rest, to postpone the whole business. So great was the inbred antipathy of Englishmen to any form of statutory service, so deep their distrust of their German king and his German politics, that the Tory gentry and farmers abetted and fomented the obstruction, and did so openly and without shame.[1] In the existing temper of the country it was impossible to carry out the act, and yet such a home defence force as it contemplated was essential to the complete realisation of Pitt's strategical system. His method of increasing the potency of his first military line by getting all or part of it upon the sea was imperfect in default of means to hold in check retaliatory movements by the enemy.

Abroad things had reached their lowest depth. The

[1] Walpole, *Memoirs of George II.*, p. 41; *Chatham Corr.*, vol. i. pp. 257–262; *Newcastle Papers, Add. MSS.* 32,873 *passim.*

news of the failure at Louisbourg had been followed only a week after the Rochefort expedition had started by news that was far worse. The very day it sailed, Cumberland, instead of clinging to Stade, had signed the famous convention of Klosterzeven and thrown up the sponge. As he fell back from Verden Richelieu had pressed him with astonishing vigour, and quickly seized Bremen on the Weser and Harburg, opposite Hamburg, on the Elbe. These two places mark the base-line of the peninsula which is formed by the estuaries of the two rivers, and in which Stade stands. Not content with thus hedging Cumberland in, Richelieu still pressed the pursuit through the marshy country till his advanced troops reached Bremervörde, which is the central point of the peninsula, and only some twenty miles from Stade. But here his offensive had become so much strained and attenuated that it was checked and flung back by the Hessians. The limit of Richelieu's impetus was reached, and he had to draw back and establish his headquarters at Klosterzeven about midway between Bremen and Harburg.

For the time, at least, a deadlock was produced. Although the Stade peninsula did not afford an entirely favourable theatre for the strategy which Wellington employed at Torres Vedras, it certainly had possibilities in that direction. But here came in that all-important factor in the art of war—the temper of the people. The Hanoverians had no such stake in the struggle as had the Portuguese in 1810. Clausewitz lays it down as one of the bases of his system that the first and most comprehensive of all strategical questions is to understand rightly what the war means to the people engaged in it, so as to measure the degree of national endurance upon which you may rely. In this case no further endurance was to be expected. For the Hanoverians the sacrifice

which a prolongation of the struggle would entail was out of all proportion to any gain which it was likely to bring. For them to get rid of the French was victory. So Denmark was induced to intervene with a suggestion of a cessation of hostilities in return for Cumberland's breaking up his army. Though Richelieu very rightly took a high line and blustered at having the Hanoverian army at his mercy, he probably knew well enough how difficult it would be to get rid of it if England chose to keep it supplied from the sea. The eagerness with which he insisted on the fact that there was no fleet at Cumberland's back is evidence of how fully he was alive to the danger of such a fleet appearing. Indeed he was already feeling the disturbing power of the sea. The moment he had occupied Bremen, Cumberland had ordered Hyde Parker, who was then in the Elbe, to send some frigates round to blockade the Weser. This was promptly done, and every Bremen ship that entered the river was seized by the British cruisers.[1] The severance of this source of supply, added to the marshy and unhealthy nature of the country on the French front, made the siege or even the investment of Stade no slight undertaking for an army so exhausted as Richelieu knew his to be. It was likely to prove an undertaking of which no one could see the end. So long as the place stood, it must suck the mass of his remaining strength away to the extreme left of his position, whereas it was upon his ability to operate towards his extreme right, and so join hands with Soubise and the Imperialists, that rested the only hope of bringing the campaign to a successful issue. Richelieu therefore eagerly grasped the proffered means of escape from his irksome position—so eagerly indeed that every difficult point on which the

[1] Cumberland to Mitchell, Sept. 30, *Mitchell Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 274.

negotiations might have been wrecked was left unsettled. He did not even dare to insist on the disarmament of Cumberland's troops; but believed he would be in a position to enforce this when once they were dispersed.[1] The only terms reduced to black and white were that the troops of Hesse, Brunswick, and Gotha should return to their own states and there be disbanded, and that about half the Hanoverians should be interned in cantonments round Stade, while the rest were to pass beyond the Elbe. The French were to continue in possession of the duchy of Bremen and all that of Verden except the district of Stade till the two governments were reconciled. There still remained, however, the incubus of Hyde Parker's squadron closing the Weser and seriously complicating the question of supply. A day or two later, therefore, it was arranged by a supplementary article that Richelieu should evacuate the city and territory of Bremen, on condition that the blockade of the Weser was raised and the captured ships released. Cumberland, accordingly, took upon himself to order Hyde Parker—over whom he had no authority—to leave the navigation of the Weser free and recall the frigates which had been blockading it.[2]

Everywhere the convention caused an extraordinary sensation. No one knew quite what to think of it. The moment the French court heard of the Danish intervention, orders had been hurried off to Richelieu in hot haste that on no account whatever was he to consent to a suspension of arms, since it was only by pressure on the King of England's Electoral dominions that they could hope for a favourable peace.[3] Newcastle, when he re-

[1] Waddington, vol. i. p. 473.
[2] Cumberland to Holderness, Bremervörde, Sept. 10, *Newcastle Papers, Add. MSS.* 32,373.
[3] Waddington, vol. i. p. 474.

ceived the news, vowed he could not understand what Richelieu's game could be. Hardwicke could only suggest it had to do with the dangerous movement which Frederick had suddenly developed against Soubise and the Imperialists, and before which they were already being forced to fall back. The great question, however, was whether or not the Convention should be ratified, and if not, how it could be broken. It was obvious that, owing to Richelieu's hurry in leaving all the difficult points unsettled, its execution must afford all kinds of openings for breaking it. Pitt was for ignoring it altogether, and sending orders direct to General Spörcken, Cumberland's second in command, to fall on the French at once.

It was a moment, as he divined, that cried aloud for a sudden and vigorous resumption of the offensive. By the end of the month (September) it was known that, besides the fact that Soubise was falling back away from Richelieu, the Russians, after fighting a successful action, had found their offensive power exhausted, and were in full retreat across the frontier. This, of course, compelled the Swedes to halt, and Frederick's rear was safe if Richelieu could only be held where he was. At the same time news from France told of the alarm Hawke's fleet was causing. Paris had been hastily denuded of troops. Every available man of the garrison, including the "Maison du Roi," the King's own household guard, was being hurried to the scene with all the haste imaginable, besides troops from Normandy and elsewhere. Pitt declared that in his opinion one sharp blow on Richelieu's left would suffice to send the French back to the Rhine.[1]

[1] *Newcastle Papers*, Oct. 3, *Add. MSS.* 32,874. The real effect of the Rochefort expedition as a diversion has been so often denied that it may

There can be little doubt the convention would have been broken by King George had not the French saved him the disagreeable task. Richelieu in fact fell into his own trap. The Hessians had already begun their march when the Landgrave of Hesse, who was in Hamburg, sent to demand of Richelieu what was to become of them. Richelieu, alarmed at his last orders from Paris, replied that it was his intention to disarm them. So flagrant a breach of the articles could not be passed without protest. The execution of the convention was immediately stopped and the Hessians ordered to stand fast. Richelieu had already begun a hasty concentration to his right, in a desperate effort to stop Frederick's advance on Soubise. To force the execution of the convention was for a time out of his power, and the whole thing was brought to a standstill. It was only by accepting the situation that he could continue his movement to save Soubise.

be well to give the French official return of the movements which it actually caused.

Regiments.	Bat-talions.	Stations.	Marched.	Rochelle.
Gardes Françaises . .	2	Paris	Sept. 29	Oct. 12
Do. do. . . .	2	,,	Oct. 1	,, 14
Gardes Suisses . . .	2	,,	,, 3	,, 16
Limousin	2	Caen	Sept. 27	,, 13
Royal Vaisseaux . .	2	Valogne	,, 29	,, 15
Languedoc (2 squadrons) .	...	Saint-Lô	Oct. 2	,, 17
Bouillon	2	Mézières	Sept. 28	,, 19
Gardes du corps . . .	...	Versailles	,, 30	,, 22
Mousquetaires . . .	...	Paris	Oct. 2–4	,, 23–25
Gendarmes et Chevaulégers	...	Versailles	,, 5	,, 26
Grenadiers à cheval . .	...	Troyes	,, 5	,, 27

This remarkable concentration of the flower of the French army is to be explained by the fact that about this time there were lying helpless at Rochefort some fourteen of the line and eight frigates, besides transports and vessels on the stocks. The guards never actually reached Rochelle. When Hawke's departure was known they were halted, but not immediately recalled. See General le Comte Pajol, *Guerres sous Louis XV.*, vol. vi. p. 320.

Colonel Yorke sent home the news in some exultation, pointing out that the enemy's plans were all upset, and that if Cumberland's army could only be preserved and placed under Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick, one of Frederick's ablest lieutenants, the French would be undone. At the same time he pointed out that the attitude of the British Government towards the convention, combined with the expedition to Rochefort, had greatly raised our prestige, and put Frederick in a much better temper.

Pitt lost not a moment. In order to deepen still further the embarrassment of the French, he was determined to authorise Hawke to seize and hold the isle of Rhé in order to set up a continuing diversion. He summoned the Secret Committee at once. His view was adopted, and the order sent out. But that very day the baffled expedition put in to Spithead. Pitt was furious. He vowed the land officers had been in a conspiracy with the King and Cumberland to ensure the failure of his system and force a return to the old Continental plan. He was for sending them back at once to occupy Rhé. This, of course, was to alter the character of the expedition by changing it from a diversion to an eccentric attack. But Ligonier and Holderness both supported him on the committee. The rest opposed. Hardwicke, when he heard of it, said he could not understand how any one could have approved such a scheme. He had always supported the attack on Rochefort, he said, on the ground that, as the French avoided decisive actions at sea, it was right to destroy their docks and ships. "This," he wrote, "was an important object; but as for holding a place in France it amounts to nothing." Thus it is clear that Hardwicke and his friends had quite failed to grasp the fundamental idea of Pitt's strategy or to

understand the value of diversions. The idea of Rhé, therefore, had to be abandoned and the subject dropped. The more pressing question was what to do about Hanover. Pitt was more violent than ever for breaking the convention. Mansfield, the Lord Chief-Justice, who had been called to the Secret Committee, said it could not be done. Pitt was resolved it should, and before the committee rose they had decided to tell the King that if he would declare the convention broken and annulled, and order his army to resume hostilities, they would take the whole of it into their pay.[1]

The intimation was accompanied by another—that, as a matter of course, until the troops resumed hostilities not a penny more of the subsidies would be paid. The King quickly made up his mind. The convention was to be denounced. Cumberland had been recalled already. The reception he met with from his father was so cruel in its severity that it left him no course but to resign all his offices and appointments. Pitt seized the moment to complete his absolute control of the war, and to get rid of what he called "the whole clan of Inactives." To depose Cumberland was not enough. At any moment the broken-hearted old King might relent and restore his son. Pitt therefore eagerly pressed for the immediate appointment of Sir John Ligonier to succeed him, with a peerage and a marshal's bâton. There were difficulties, however, and they have considerable interest as throwing light on the title and constitutional position of a British commander-in-chief. Newcastle of course consulted Hardwicke. Cumberland had been "captain-

[1] Pitt to Newcastle, and "News received by the Dutch Mail," Oct. 5; Newcastle to Yorke, and "Proceedings at Sir Conyers Darcy's Lodgings," Oct. 7; Newcastle to Hardwicke, Oct. 8, and Hardwicke's reply, Oct. 9; *Newcastle Papers, Add. MSS.* 32,874. See also Waddington, vol. i. p. 516.

general" as well as "commander-in-chief." It was an office which in some undefined way carried with it the constitutional as distinguished from the mere military command of the army. For this reason the title had been given to Monk at the Restoration, so as to reassure public opinion on the vexed question that had caused so much trouble. Marlborough had had it too. But Newcastle was of opinion that Ligonier, "like Schomberg under Marlborough," ought to be only "general and commander-in-chief of the troops in Great Britain." He was not sure, however, that Pitt did not mean him to be "captain-general," which, he added, "would be ridiculous." Hardwicke did not quite take this view. He replied that he hoped the office would be filled at once, "and in such a way," he said, "as that there may really be a *supreme command* over the army; for if it is not so, but the generalship is supposed to remain in the King, I see plainly where it will soon centre behind the curtain." He therefore quite agreed with Pitt it was best to make Ligonier "captain-general," but admitted there were difficulties. In any case, the least that could be done was to give him "a military commission as general and commander-in-chief of all his Majesty's forces in *Great Britain and America*." This course was adopted. It was explained to the King that there was to be no "captain-general," and that he himself "would always be the commander"; but still the old man grumbled. "Why America?" he said, when Newcastle pressed for his consent. The Minister answered that it was in order "that the officers there may see that Sir John Ligonier has some *inspection* over them," and so in the end Newcastle got the thing through.[1]

[1] Newcastle to Hardwicke, Oct. 15 and 23; Hardwicke to Newcastle, Oct. 16; "Mem. for the King," *Newcastle Papers, Add. MSS.* 32,875.

The bâton, however, was withheld, but by the end of the year the new commander-in-chief was given an Irish Viscounty.

In this way Pitt secured at his right hand a far-sighted soldier of irreproachable prestige, who thoroughly believed in the efficacy of his system, and the whole national machinery for war could at last be set to work in perfect unity. It was now more than ever useless for the soldiers to try to lay the blame of the Rochefort miscarriage on Pitt or the Admiralty. Hawke was very graciously received by the King, and immediately sent to sea again to try to intercept De la Motte on his return from Louisbourg—an attempt in which his ill-luck again clung to him, and in which he again failed. He and Anson both warmly defended Pitt, and backed his views as to the practicability of success at Rochefort. Wolfe, moreover, so Hardwicke was told, "agreed with Hawke and the other sea officers as to the behaviour of the land officers."[1] An inquiry was ordered into the whole affair, and the result of it was that Mordaunt was brought before a court-martial. He was acquitted by his brother officers—as in duty bound to their own service; but every one knew it was not Pitt's design that had been at fault.

Meanwhile abroad things were shaping themselves in such a way as clearly to call for a repetition of the dose, and from all sides came such evidence of the pressure, which even the failure had caused, as could only confirm Pitt in his faith.

When Richelieu reached Halberstadt, Frederick was obliged to fall back again into Saxony and leave Soubise alone. But the effort which Richelieu had made had given the last blow to his army, and in spite of the most

[1] *Newcastle Papers, Add. MSS.* 32,875.

urgent instructions from Paris he was unable to move a step further. He was even compelled to enter with Frederick into one of those curious arrangements for an armistice which are so recurrent a feature of those old wars. Its effect was to give breathing time to Richelieu's army, and enable him to fall back on Brunswick for the winter. It also left Frederick free to move again. The result was one of the most famous of his exploits. On November 5th he struck Soubise at Rosbach, and crushed his motley army off the board.

For Richelieu there was as little peace. He had no sooner reached Brunswick than he too saw, instead of rest, a winter campaign before him. The Hanoverians were concentrating; Frederick had been asked to lend Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick to command them, and had consented, and the whole subsidised army was being put in motion. Next he heard they had occupied Bremervörde, and he had to reinforce his garrison at Harburg. He knew his convention was not worth the paper it was written on. "Each of us," the old wit said, "is only politely waiting for the other to shoot first." At this time he was at Lüneburg, some five-and-twenty miles to the south-east of Ferdinand, trying to stretch out a hand to the retiring Swedes and induce them to stand up to the Prussian force with which Lehwaldt had been operating against them ever since the retreat of the Russians had left him disengaged.

It was Ferdinand who fired the first shot. On November 28th he wrote to Richelieu formally denouncing the convention, and forthwith commenced his advance. Richelieu's position was untenable. He fell back at once to the Aller, and with his left resting on Verden and the Weser, began to concentrate his spiritless army at Celle. In the midst of this disheartening work came the news

of Leuthen—Frederick's second great victory in that memorable winter campaign. No sooner had he settled Soubise at Rosbach than he turned upon the Austrians, and within the month he had struck his blow and driven them clean out of Silesia. Never was known in one campaign so great a transformation. The Swedes were shrinking under the walls of Stralsund, with their cavalry locked up in the island of Rügen, and of all the dangers that a few months before seemed to be on the point of crushing Frederick out of existence and destroying the whole fabric of the British war plan, there remained not one but the lifeless "Grand Army" of Richelieu.

In England a new note was sounding, and in the King's Speech with which Pitt met Parliament it rings out clearly. "The late signal success in Germany," so the passage runs, "has given a happy turn to affairs, which it is incumbent on us to improve; and in this critical conjuncture the eyes of Europe are upon you." The spot where, for the moment, it most called for improvement was where Ferdinand and Richelieu lay facing each other on the Aller. It was just that point, moreover, that was most exposed to the peculiar force which Pitt had discovered, and it was there the stupendous energy he was about to develop first made itself felt.

Frederick saw it in a moment. Directly he knew the Rochefort expedition had returned empty-handed, he had sent off to London a suggestion that it should proceed in mid-winter to the Elbe. If the troops, he said, were thrown ashore there in January and advanced resolutely in concert with the subsidised army and Lehwaldt's corps, they might roll up Richelieu's line as far up the Weser as Minden, and compel him to evacuate both Hanover and Brunswick. Then, if three thousand cavalry were

added in the spring, he could be cleared out of Germany altogether.[1]

So keen was Frederick on the project that he offered to take command of the combined force himself. But it was a length to which Pitt dared not go as yet. The method he adopted was milder and more characteristic. Indeed, as things stood, his defensive plan seemed to call for nothing so drastic as what Frederick proposed. For the moment the position of Ferdinand looked more favourable than it really was. It even seemed as though he were about to rival the transformation which his master Frederick had brought about. By December 15th he had advanced so far as to occupy the suburbs of Celle, on the north bank of the Aller, opposite Richelieu's headquarters. He had even seized a post on the French side of the river, and for a day or two it looked as though Richelieu would have to fall back on Hanover and abandon the line of the Aller altogether. But before Ferdinand could press his advantage, sufficient reinforcements had come up to enable the French marshal to hold his ground. Further, troops were known to have been called in from East Friesland, and it was clear that single-handed Ferdinand could do no more. The remedy was obvious. It was an ideal case for exhibiting Pitt's specific. Even Newcastle could see it, and on December 14th he made the following entry in his "Memoranda for the King": "The French troops on the side of Ostfrise [in East Friesland] are actually *en marche* to join Richelieu's army. Whether useful to give out intention of sending troops there so as to amuse the French and keep them back—not actually to send them." A week later he enters again: "M. Münchhausen's paper about

[1] Frederick to Michell, and same to Van der Hellen, Oct. 22; Mitchell to Holderness, Oct. 30 (most secret), *Politische Corr.*, vol. xv. pp. 455, 466–7.

Ostfrise and Emden. To speak to Anson about it"; and next day: "Sent Münchhausen to Mr. Pitt."[1]

Now the Baron von Münchhausen was the representative of Hanover in London, and one may assume, therefore, that Prince Ferdinand shared Frederick's view as to the confusing power that lay in the mere threat of troops upon the sea. It was Christmas time, and Pitt was up to his eyes in work toiling single-handed at a vast war plan for the coming year. Besides a repetition and development of last year's expedition, and other raids and naval movements, he had the whole American campaign in hand. The strain was more than even he could endure. He sent impatiently to Newcastle, who was enjoying a Christmas house-party down at Claremont, begging him to return to town and hold a Cabinet to relieve him of the intolerable load of responsibility. Newcastle replied that he had a bishop staying with him and could not possibly come. Besides, he knew what Pitt's American plan was and wholly approved it. Pitt, in answer, sarcastically apologised. He could not think of disturbing his agreeable engagements, but begged he would not think him unreasonable for having asked for the sanction of the Cabinet "concerning so important and extensive a scene as the campaign in America, where England and Europe are to be fought for."[2] Yet, hard pressed as he was, Pitt found room for the new suggestion, and set about preparing what proved to be strategically one of the most interesting *coups* of the war.

At sea the conditions were fairly favourable. Though no decisive action had been fought, we had established a control sufficiently strong to lay the enemy open to raids, and even eccentric attacks, along his whole Atlantic and North Sea coasts. Hawke and Boscawen had failed, it is

[1] *Add. MSS.* 32,875. [2] *Ibid.*, Dec. 26–7.

true, to intercept De la Motte. Driven off their station at the critical moment by a gale, they had been unable to regain it before the French squadron, shattered by tempest and exhausted with disease, staggered into Brest, and two straggling frigates were all they captured. Holburne's blockade at Louisbourg had told its heavy tale. Devoured with scurvy and putrid fevers, De la Motte's fleet had scarcely been able to get to sea at all. It reached Brest in the last extremities, to infect the whole port with its poison. Within a month of its arrival, at the time when the work of re-equipment should have been in full blast for the spring, there were, besides the townspeople, over 7000 men in the King's pay down with disease, of whom over a thousand were dead. The whole energy of the establishment was absorbed in fighting the calamity, and both fleet and port were in a state of paralysis.

In the Mediterranean France fared little better. There we had kept a sufficient squadron under Osborne and Saunders, which had been operating all the spring and summer with considerable success in destroying French trade and protecting our own. They had further found time to keep the coast of Provence in a state of chronic alarm which seriously hampered the progress of naval work at Toulon. It was the intention of the French to repeat their plan of concentration which so far had been successful in saving Louisbourg, and for this purpose Monsieur de la Clue, who had commanded the rearguard in Byng's action at Minorca, was trying to prepare a squadron, which, like Bauffremont in the previous campaign, he was to take to the West Indies in the autumn, and on to Louisbourg in the spring. So great were the difficulties, however, that in the autumn when Osborne, according to the regular practice, had fallen back on

Gibraltar La Clue had only six of the line ready for sea. With these he sailed on November 8th, bent on repeating the exploit of Bauffremont. But as he approached the Straits he ascertained that Osborne was on the alert, waiting for him with a force he could not face. There was nothing for it, as it seemed to him, but to run into Cartagena to await reinforcements, and there Osborne was keeping him under close observation with his cruisers, while he held the Straits with his battle squadron.[1]

No active naval force, therefore, remained to the French which could seriously interfere if we chose to make a demonstration against the East Frisian coast, and the events which marked the opening of the new year left no doubt on Pitt's mind that such a demonstration should be made. In the last days of December Richelieu found himself strong enough to repass the Aller, and Ferdinand had to fall back on Lüneburg. Thence he announced to Pitt he would be ready to resume the offensive by the middle of February. His intention was to begin by seizing the neutral city of Bremen, through which the French left was again receiving its supplies. Harburg he forced to capitulate on December 30th, and Bremen was all that was required to give him an impregnable sea-base. But the energetic Duc de Broglie, who commanded Richelieu's left, saw the danger, and the day after Harburg fell asked leave to attempt Bremen himself by a *coup de main*. Leave was granted, and on January 15th, by a move of extraordinary daring, he re-entered the place with a few horse and forced it to receive a garrison. Ferdinand was in no way discouraged. He believed he still saw his way to gain his end. His new idea was to make a

[1] Lacour-Gayet, *Marine sous Louis XV.*, p. 281 ; Osborne's Despatches, Dec. 11, 1757, to Jan. 19, 1758, *In-letters*, 384.

sudden concentration upon the heart of the French position at Verden. Could he but seize the place he knew it must compel Broglie to abandon Bremen. And not only this, it must also give him Nieuburg, or in other words the whole of the Lower Weser, on which Richelieu's left rested. Once in possession of this line he would be able to move up his Stade magazine to Verden and assume a vigorous offensive from that point. All he asked to enable him to carry out his pretty plan was that a small English force should be landed in East Friesland to hold the French troops that were occupying it, and prevent their reinforcing the army in his front.[1]

This must have been the scheme with which Newcastle had sent Münchhausen to Pitt. The idea was strongly supported by Colonel Yorke. It had been urged upon him by a certain Sir John Goodricke, whom he described in sending home the plan as "an excellent man for any sudden commission." Goodricke asserts that he had often spoken of an expedition to East Frisia, because the French garrison was so weak and retreat so easy that the risk was small. If the French were found too strong the expedition could hang about the mouths of the Ems and Weser, and refresh its cavalry in the Duchy of Bremen. It was much easier, in his opinion, than expeditions on the French coast, and promised strategical consequences of much greater value. For, as he pointed out, if we got a footing in East Frisia the supplies which the French were drawing thence would be stopped, and Richelieu would be hard put to it not to fall back on his base magazines far away at Wesel on the Rhine. "British officers," he said, "who were there last year saw how easily it could be done, but if decided on the blow should be struck in March, before the French

[1] Ferdinand's despatch from Ülzen, Jan. 5, 1758, *Newcastle Papers*, 32,877.

could move." "It is too much to say," he concluded, "that the French will necessarily retreat, but probably they would, as their generals will hardly care to rest on the Weser when their rear is insecure, and their communications with Cleves threatened by British cavalry."[1] At the same time came intelligence from Paris how it was openly said there, that if 15,000 British troops and a few Prussians joined Ferdinand the tables would be completely turned on the French army.[2]

To all these considerations which were calling for action in East Frisia must be added another which it was almost impossible to ignore. From Frederick's headquarters Mitchell was urging a direct reinforcement of Ferdinand's force with British troops. Early in January Frederick had submitted to him a strong memorial pointing out the unfairness and strategical folly of England's keeping her army idle at home, now that all fear of an invasion had passed, and containing a direct appeal that she should return to what he called the sound policy of Queen Anne and William III. Mitchell tactfully induced him not to send it forward, thinking there was less likelihood of trouble if he put Frederick's ideas more mildly in his own language.[3] But even that was resented by Pitt, and the attempt only produced one of his violent outbursts. Mitchell, he wrote to Newcastle, was no fool, and knew well whose game he was playing. "It is not the plan of our administration," he said, "and the tools of another system are perpetually marring every hopeful measure of the present administration. In a word, if you cannot eradicate this lurking diffusive poison . . . I

[1] Goodricke to Yorke, Jan. 14, 1758; Yorke to Newcastle, Jan. 17; *Newcastle Papers*, 32,877.
[2] *Ibid.*, Jan. 24.
[3] *Politische Corr.*, vol. xvi. pp. 160–2.

think it better for us to have done. I do not intend for one that Andrew Mitchell shall carry me where I have resolved not to go." Newcastle was shocked by Pitt's vehemence; he complained to Hardwicke. His friend told him he must accept the fact that nothing short of a formal demand from Frederick would ever get our troops on the Continent. "I fear," he added, "our new friends [meaning, of course, Pitt and his party] have promised the 'country gentlemen' that no such thing shall be." He believed it was on these terms that the "country gentlemen" had been induced to vote the supplies—a curious instance of the way in which internal politics may deflect strategy.[1] So when Newcastle replied to Yorke he told him troops could only be had in Hanover by wrecking the Government, and that as for his friend Goodricke's scheme he did not relish it at all.[2]

Frederick was far from making any such demand. He was too good a strategist not to see the correctness of Pitt's system from the British point of view. He was also too good a strategist to so much as expect him to regard the war from any other. He contented himself, after the fall of Bremen, by a grumble to Ferdinand that the English had not fulfilled their promise to keep his rear free, and advised him to look to the Ems and the Weser when the frost broke, because the French had no magazine nearer than Wesel on the Rhine. They would be done for, he pointed out, if they could not form one at Bremen or Emden, since land carriage through Westphalia would be impossible in the spring, and there were no horses there.[3]

[1] Pitt to Newcastle, Jan. 28; Newcastle to Hardwicke, and Hardwicke's reply, Jan. 29, *Newcastle Papers*, 32,877.
[2] *Ibid.*, Jan. 31.
[3] *Ibid.*, Feb. 2 and 3, *Politische Corr.*, vol. xiv. pp. 218–9.

In this suggestion lay the key to solve the whole difficulty. Though Pitt could not listen to direct action on the Continent, such an eccentric operation as Frederick had in his mind was entirely within his "system." Indeed orders for the purpose had already been given. The man chosen to carry out the work was Commodore Charles Holmes, who at Quebec was destined to connect his name immortally with one of the finest bits of amphibious work ever done. He had commanded in the third post under Holburne in the Louisbourg fleet, and in the great gale his flagship, the *Grafton*, had been totally dismasted and her rudder carried away. In despite of this he had navigated his ship home under jury rig with a reputation for seamanship surpassed by no one in the service. His reward was another broad pennant and the command of the North Sea squadron.[1]

Within a week after Frederick's letter to Ferdinand Holmes had collected full pilotage details of the Ems, Weser, and Elbe. He had a cutter out observing the ice, and was suggesting to the Admiralty that Yarmouth was the best station for him to concentrate his squadron until the ice broke up. For answer he received a reprimand to the effect that their lordships were much dissatisfied that he was not already on his station, as they had certain information that the rivers were clear. He sailed immediately, and on the last day of the month had the pleasure of reporting that he had been the first ship in the river that year, that he had already begun seizing Bremen vessels, and was in communication with Ferdinand.[2]

[1] Hervey's *Naval History*, vol. v. p. 85, where is a plate representing the steering apparatus used.

[2] Holmes's despatches are in *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters* (*North Sea*), 519, dated Feb. 10, 18, 19, 22, and 28; the last "In the Weser." In this letter he characteristically says he objects to receiving *orders* from Ferdinand or the Hanoverian Government, but that he means to act on them.

The political and military situation at the moment must be clearly understood. Frederick was in no very pleasant temper, as we have seen. Pitt was anxious to get a definite convention with him, and had tried to content him with the offer of a handsome subsidy in place of a Baltic squadron, and the troops he could not and would not spare. It was not a success. Ships and battalions were what Frederick wanted, and he professed himself deeply hurt at the offer of money in their place. It was no use. The British Government could only protest, that they had no troops to send, and as for a Baltic squadron, so long as the three Northern powers, Russia, Denmark, and Sweden, remained united under French influence, it was impossible for a British fleet to enter the Sound except in such force as was entirely out of the question. It was a critical moment. Frederick, as Lord Hardwicke said, had presented his ultimatum. Pitt felt he was bent on forcing his hand, and his mistrust of Prussia grew darker still. He began to think the whole Northern system was about to give way under his feet. He kept Holderness five hours on end settling the draft of the despatch with which Frederick was to be answered, and weighed every word with such exasperating care that his unhappy colleague vowed he could never go through such a time again.[1]

As for the military situation, Ferdinand, punctually to his promise, had resumed the offensive on February 16th, and since then the situation had so far improved that the news from Stade cured Pitt of an attack of gout and put him in the highest spirits.[2]

Ferdinand's antagonists had been entirely changed. Richelieu had received leave of absence and had been

[1] *Newcastle Papers*, Feb. 25 and 26; *Cabinet Memoranda*, Feb. 23, *ibid.*, 32,997.

[2] Pitt to Newcastle, Feb. 28, *Ibid.*, 32,878.

replaced by M. de Clermont. The Duc de Broglie had replaced the Prince de Soubise on the Upper Rhine, and had been succeeded in command of Clermont's left by M. de Saint-Germain. At Paris the Marshal de Belleisle was once more supreme at the War Office. Besides these changes in command, the grand army itself was not what it had been. The effect of the collapse of the last campaign and the expedition to Rochefort had been to reduce the spirits of the French Government so low that they made a representation to Vienna with a view of getting rid of the Continental entanglement, and leaving their hands free to deal with England and save their American Colonies. They had urged that it was impossible for them to support the aggressive policy of Austria as they could wish, for not only was their army greatly weakened by the late campaign, but it was absolutely necessary for them to withdraw from it a considerable force for the protection of their own coasts.[1] They hinted at peace with Prussia, or at least a return to the former defensive arrangement. Vienna was of course furious. For a month it looked as if the great coalition was going to break down altogether, and it was only by the French promising to continue a vigorous support of the war in Germany on the terms of the treaty of Versailles that the split was healed. The result was that some 24,000 men had to be withdrawn from the grand army to reinforce the Duc de Broglie. Nor was this all. The anxiety which the Rochefort expedition had caused appears to have been real enough. At any rate, besides the detachment for Broglie, another corps composed of twelve battalions and thirty squadrons was recalled to France.[2] That the object of their recall was coast de-

[1] Bernis to Choiseul, Jan. 6, 1758, Waddington, vol. i. p. 732.
[2] Pajol, *Guerres sous Louis XV.*, vol. iv. p. 215.

fence, there can be no doubt; for so soon as Clermont reached Hanover and was able to grasp the insecure position of his army, he sent to the King an elaborately reasoned request for the suspension of the order detaching from it the troops destined for the coasts of France.[1] Indeed it is beyond doubt that the Rochefort expedition, unsuccessful as it had been, was continuing to act as a substantial diversion.

Over and above the actual diversion of troops it caused, it had produced a serious disturbance of the French war plan. For it gave colour to a rumour that ten or twelve thousand British troops were coming to the Weser and the Elbe. It was certainly a disconcerting possibility. The first French line extended from Wolfenbüttel along the Ocker through Brunswick to the Aller, thence along the Aller through Celle and Verden to the Weser, and so along the Weser to Bremen, with a division thrown out almost in the air to hold East Friesland. Ferdinand's opening movements were so cleverly designed as to threaten the French right, centre, and left—mainly the right; but the rumour of the British descent on Friesland pointed with almost equal force to an attack on the left at Bremen. The whole situation was so difficult that Clermont could see nothing for it but to retire behind the Aller. The movement took place all along the line about February 20th. Verden was evacuated by mistake of the commandant; and so soon as Saint-Germain heard of it he too withdrew the whole of his troops to the left bank of the Weser. Ferdinand, who had already occupied Rothenburg, now made a dash at Verden and seized it before the French could return and destroy the bridge. The whole was a piece of sharp strategical work as brilliant as it was

[1] Waddington, vol. ii. p. 8.

triumphant, and it was this enheartening news that had cured Pitt's gout. The line of the Aller was lost. The comfortable position behind which Clermont had hoped to prepare his army for resuming the offensive in the summer was broken into, and there was nothing for it but to abandon Hanover, Brunswick, and Wolfenbüttel, and fall still further back behind the Weser. In the eyes of his chief strategical adviser there was one danger which, apart from all the others, made retreat inevitable, and that was the prospect of an English expedition landing in East Friesland or the estuary of the Weser.[1]

But Clermont's troubles did not end here. For Ferdinand, not content with his occupation of Verden, had pushed on vigorously and seized Hoya, another of the French posts on the Weser a little lower down, and thence he reached up the river till within the week Nienburg was also in his hands. Thus the line of Weser was completely lost, and at all costs Clermont saw he must recover it. What made matters worse was that there was no news of Saint-Germain. The loss of Hoya had cut direct communication with him, and in view of the apprehended English descent great anxiety was felt for Bremen. Clermont, however, sent him orders that he was to combine with him in recovering the line of the Weser. It was not at Bremen that these orders reached Saint-Germain. So soon as he had heard that Hoya was lost he regarded his position as no longer tenable. Bremen was promptly evacuated, and with the whole left wing, excepting that part of it which was holding East Friesland, he fell back upon Osnabrück.

Thus it was that when Holmes appeared in the Weser the French position had entirely changed. It now stretched from Osnabrück eastward to Minden on the

[1] Cremilles to Belleisle, Waddington, vol. ii. p. 11.

Weser, and thence through Hameln, where Clermont had his headquarters and most of his force. Still Ferdinand gave him no rest. Already he had sat down before Minden. It was the key of the position, and Clermont pressed Saint-Germain more strongly than ever to combine a vigorous movement to save the place; but Saint-Germain made difficulties, and Clermont himself was doubting. He was haunted with a suspicion that Ferdinand was only making a demonstration to hold him to the Weser while he moved into East Friesland, joined hands with a British force, and then struck straight down the Ems to cut him off from his base at Wesel.[1] This and a similar fear from the Prussians on his right so pressed upon the staff that the opinion fast deepened that the only way to save the army was to carry it back bodily to the Rhine. This strategy Belleisle was forced to approve, but on one point he and Clermont differed. The idea was merely to withdraw the army behind the Rhine to prepare for a strenuous return to the offensive in the summer. Belleisle, therefore, who had his eyes on the great preparations that were going on in the English ports, and was persuaded that East Friesland was the objective, attached the greatest importance to the retention of Emden, and there were diplomatic reasons for its being in Austrian hands when it came to making peace, which Bernis at the Foreign Office pressed with equal earnestness. The garrison of Emden, it will be remembered, had not shared Saint-Germain's retreat. Belleisle would have it hold its ground. Clermont disagreed, and said he must withdraw it. It was Holmes who settled the dispute.[2]

[1] Cremilles to Belleisle, March 6, Waddington, vol. ii. pp. 33–34.
[2] Waddington, vol. ii. p. 45.

When the commodore had got into communication with Ferdinand, the Prince had confined himself to general directions as to the form he wished the blockade to take. But no sooner had he secured his hold on the Weser than he begged Holmes to go in person into the Ems and there do the enemy all the hurt he could. The Prince informed him that he hoped much from the pressure of the British squadron as a preparation for the operations he himself meant to undertake against Emden as soon as he could. On March 12th Holmes was in the river, but before him was no easy task. At the best of times the navigation of the Ems is extremely intricate, but the buoys as usual had been removed for the winter, and the French had not replaced them. One of his two frigates at once took the ground, and he had to send her home escorted by his bomb ketch the *Stromboli*. This left him with his other little frigate the *Sea-horse*, flying his broad pennant, and an armed cutter. With these vessels he proceeded to pick out the channel for himself. He had been at it four days when the *Stromboli* rejoined, and he resolved to proceed to business. Accordingly, next day he went in and anchored in the gut between Delfzijl and Knok, in full view of Emden. It was a feat of seamanship on which the garrison had never counted. The unbuoyed channel was regarded as a complete defence. "It was, therefore," as Holmes quaintly wrote, "with equal surprise and concern that they observed the arrival of his Majesty's ships *Sea-horse* and *Stromboli*." Quitting the land-front works upon which they were engaged, the garrison began to throw up batteries towards the sea, as though expecting an attack from that direction. But Holmes had not yet done. Next morning, the 18th, he weighed again, and working still further in, came

to anchor at a spot between Knok and Emden, which effectually cut off all supplies coming either up or down the river. The garrison, according to the return which Holmes sent in, consisted of 2500 French horse and foot, 1100 Austrian foot, and two companies of artillery —or 3720 men in all; but one day's contemplation of the apparition in the river sitting on their communications was enough to loose their hold. "On the 19th," wrote Holmes, "at six o'clock in the morning the French troops were under arms, and marched out of the town before night. And on the 20th the Austrians began their march at nine in the morning." It was not till noon that Holmes found out what was going on, and that the garrison had been sending their baggage and cannon up the river overnight. One belated boat, he heard, was waiting behind a point of land for the tide to turn. He acted with the greatest promptitude. The moment the tide permitted, the *Acrias*, his armed cutter, with two boats was sent in pursuit under Captain Taylor. The prize they had marked down was quickly captured, and Taylor, reinforced with another armed boat, continued the pursuit up the river till night stopped him. By that time, after a sharp engagement with the retreating troops, he had captured another of their transports containing some of the chief staff-officers and all the hostages they were carrying off from Emden. By this means, says Holmes in his despatch, "I had the account already given to your lordships of the happy effect the presence of his Majesty's two ships has produced by occasioning the sudden evacuation of the enemy out of the town of Emden."[1]

[1] Holmes to Cleveland, March 21, *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters* (*North Sea*), 519. This despatch is printed in Beatson, vol. ii. pp. 160–162. His despatch to Anson is in the *Newcastle Papers* under March 25, *Add. MSS.* 32,878.

How far the situation was really affected by Holmes's operation it is difficult to say. It would seem that Clermont, in spite of Belleisle's opposition, had actually issued orders for part, if not the whole, of the garrison to retire, and that what Holmes did was to anticipate the orders, or at least greatly to hurry their execution.[1] The fact is that, before Holmes had time to strike, Clermont's position had been rendered quite hopeless by Ferdinand's energetic advance. On the 14th Minden had capitulated, and he was once more falling back—this time upon the Lippe. But Ferdinand, without waiting a day after Minden was in his hands, pushed away for Osnabrück, as though to turn the French left. Clermont could stand no more, and by the time Emden was evacuated he was already in full retreat for the Rhine. It cannot therefore be said that Holmes's operation in any way caused the final retreat, except in so far as his presence deepened the apprehension of a British expedition to Friesland. Still it remains of value as an example of the kind of influence such an operation may exercise upon Continental strategy. For it may be said with some certainty that, had Clermont been otherwise able to retain his position on the Weser, the loss of Emden, by turning his left and threatening his rear, must have forced him to abandon it.

The actual loss of Emden was, however, the work of Holmes much more directly than Clermont's final retreat. It is true that Clermont intended to abandon the place in any case, but Belleisle did not. It must be remembered

[1] Pajol says the troops in East Friesland, four battalions and thirteen squadrons, had marching orders by which they were to reach Meppen, about four days' march from Emden, the infantry on the 26th, the cavalry on the 27th. But in fact the cavalry, by forced marches, reached Bentheim, about two days' march further on, on the 22nd, and the infantry on the 25th. (*Guerres sous Louis XV.*, vol. iv. pp. 227, 229.) He does not mention Holmes's presence, and puts the evacuation on the 13th.

that Clermont had similarly warned his extreme right to fall back from Hanau and get behind the Rhine, and that Belleisle had effectually countermanded the movement. Long after Emden was lost, he and Bernis were still urging its retention, but Holmes's daring stroke had made its reoccupation impossible. So great was the importance of the place, in view of a return to the offensive which Belleisle intended in the summer, that it is quite possible he would have been prepared to risk a sufficient garrison to keep hold of it till the new campaign could begin. This possibility and all it meant was fully recognised by the other side. So long as Emden was in British hands every embarkation of British troops was a threat upon the French left, so soon as they advanced again into Westphalia. The moment Ferdinand knew of Holmes's success he despatched an urgent entreaty to London, which Mitchel, the Prussian envoy, supported, that a small force might be sent "to shut the Emden door." For a while Pitt hesitated. It was the thin end of the wedge, and he feared that "some people," as he said, would misinterpret it. But lately Frederick had been turning over a new leaf. His utterances began to express a readiness to recognise Pitt's difficulties, and to be content with any help the British found they could give him. Pitt's naturally generous nature began to be touched, and his suspicions to give way to sympathy. So great, moreover, was the strategical advantage to be secured in proportion to the troops required, that a few hours' reflection determined him to take the step. Within a week of Holmes's

[1] Bernis to Clermont, April 3, Waddington, vol. ii. p. 45. Bernis's words are: "J'ai de fortes raisons de désirer que cette place reste entre les mains de l'Impératrice jusqu'à la fin de la guerre." He probably had in his mind the base idea of the Franco-Austrian Alliance for the partition of Prussia, and thought that by securing Emden for Austria he would be able to get Ostend for France.

exploit the Secret Committee had decided to do what was wanted, and before Clermont had reached the Rhine a battalion of Brudenell's regiment was under orders for Emden.[1] Ferdinand immediately intimated that he would require Holmes's squadron no longer. Two small vessels would serve all his wants. Holmes was therefore recalled, and as soon as the troops arrived he sailed, leaving two sloops behind him, with orders to employ themselves in taking soundings in the estuaries ready for further operations.[2]

Frederick, who by this time had quite made up his mind that his best policy was frankly to accept the limitations of the British position, expressed warm gratification. Michell was ordered to convey his cordial thanks to the Ministers, and to say he recognised how deep an impression it made on the common enemy, "when England merely appeared to be about to detach an expedition, even if it never got further than a pure demonstration." By such expressions he was hoping to flatter Pitt into more drastic and direct action.[3]

Apart from its effect on the Continent, the military occupation of Emden is an interesting case of land forces directly assisting the fleet in controlling the sea. For it released the North Sea squadron at a moment when every man and every light ship was required for the vast operations that had begun. It is to these we must now turn. By the time Clermont, on the last day of March, was safely behind the Rhine, Ferdinand's violent advance had exhausted the offensive power of his army. One of those inevitable periods of rest settled down upon the West-

[1] *Newcastle Papers, Add. MSS.* 32,878, March 27 and 30; *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters (Sec. of State)*, 4122, April 3.

[2] Holmes's despatch, April 22, *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters (North Sea)*, 519.

[3] Frederick to Michell, April 10, *Politische Corr.*, vol. xvi. p. 380.

phalian theatre of the war, while each side sat still to recover breath for the summer campaign. The din of war was now upon the sea, and it is not until we get close to the machinery that Pitt had set in motion, that we can measure the disturbance of the French plans which the open wound at Emden must cause.

CHAPTER XI

THE CONTAINING MOVEMENTS OF 1758

I. Fleet and Coastal Operations—St. Malo

Never had been known in England so loud a roar of preparation, both in camp and dockyard, as had been vexing the ears of Belleisle and Clermont during the winter campaign. The fire of Pitt's spirit was burning, and everywhere the weapons that were to do his work were being welded up to time. First and foremost was a great combined expedition with a fleet of twenty of the line under Boscawen and Charles Hardy. To command the troops General Jeffery Amherst, commissary to the Hessian contingent in British pay, had been summoned hastily from Germany. To add to the menace of this appointment from Ferdinand's army the expedition sailed from Spithead on February 19th, just as the Prince had set his army in motion. It was to the westward, however, and not to the North Sea that it sailed, disclosing its real destination to be America. Still the disturbing apprehension of a British attack was not removed from the councils of France.

According to our intelligence from Paris at this time it had been decided to organise a coast-defence army of no less than 80,000 men, composed of regulars and militia. It was to be distributed in four separate camps, the first between Calais and Dunkirk, the second at Havre, the third in Brittany, so placed as to be within reach of St. Malo, L'Orient, and Brest, and the fourth to

protect Rochefort and Rochelle. The greater part of this force would of course be composed of the *gardes côtes*, or coast-defence militia, and though the diversion of regulars was probably not very great, the disturbance of agriculture caused by the continued embodiment of the local forces was already seriously crippling the strained resources of the country.[1]

It was thus the French watched for a repetition of the last blow, and while they watched two others fell upon them from other hands. The first was in the Mediterranean. There La Clue still lay in Cartagena waiting for reinforcements from Toulon which would enable him to force Osborne's position in the Straits, and take his part in the new concentration that the French had planned to save Louisbourg. But Pitt was no man to send forth a great expedition without covering it, and he had taken every precaution to prevent a repetition of last year's stalemate. The Mediterranean fleet under Osborne and Saunders was kept well up to a strength which permitted them to dominate their adversary, and three frigates were kept before Brest to warn them if any attempt were made to reinforce La Clue from that port.[2] Nevertheless the position of Osborne and Saunders was very difficult, and as interesting as it was difficult. Cartagena was, of course, a neutral port, but of so great an importance was it for us to keep Spain in a good temper that it was necessary to submit patiently to La Clue's enjoyment of his sanctuary. A close blockade or even a serious protest was out of the question. All the admirals

[1] *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters* (*Intelligence*), 3944, Feb. 24; and see Pajol, *Guerres sous Louis XV.*, vol. vi. p. 314. In April there were 12,000 men about Rochefort, and they were to be reinforced to 20,000 (*Mémoires de Luynes*, vol. xvi. p. 404).

[2] *Admiralty Secretary, Out-letters*, 1331, Oct. 19, 1757.

could do was to watch the port with their frigates and hold the Gibraltar position with their battle squadron. The method employed was this. Whenever the wind was easterly and fair for the French to try to pass the Straits Osborne got to sea between Gibraltar and Ceuta, and whenever it came westerly he went back into port to clean and refresh. Later on, as his force increased, the position he adopted was outside the Straits between Trafalgar and Espartel, as though to tempt La Clue to pass out and be certain to force him to a decisive action. So far the problem was simple. But in January the admirals got to know that La Clue was expecting from Toulon six of the line under the Marquis Duquesne, the former governor of Canada, who had sown the dragon's teeth in the Ohio Valley. The question then arose how to prevent the two French squadrons joining hands, and at the same time make sure of closing the Straits. If Osborne took up a position between Toulon and Cartagena, he opened the Straits; and if he did not, he fell into the error of permitting the enemy to concentrate. If he tried to occupy both positions he committed the still graver sin of permitting the enemy to induce him to divide his fleet, and La Clue would be strong enough relatively to force his way past the division that was holding the Straits, and so gain single-handed all that the Toulon reinforcement was intended to give him.

Such problems are the most common and the most vital which naval officers have to solve, and it is only by a clear grasp of fundamental principles and a firm adherence to them that error is to be avoided. What Osborne and Saunders decided to do was this. So soon as their force should reach the necessary strength by the arrival of the further reinforcement they were expecting, the fleet was to be divided into two squadrons, one to be

stationed at Gibraltar and one off Cartagena. Till then they meant to keep it concentrated as before at Gibraltar, and watch Cartagena with cruisers.[1] The justice of this decision turned, of course, on the strength which Osborne expected. What that was we do not know, for there was one other way out of the dilemma, and bold as it was they seized it before their fleet was complete.

On February 9th, hearing La Clue was out, they took up the westward position between Trafalgar and Espartel. While waiting there they were informed that La Clue had received two of the line from Toulon, which brought his battle squadron up to eight. Still Osborne waited, but in vain; for on the 20th La Clue put back to Cartagena.[2] Osborne heard of it at once from his cruisers and from our consul in the port, and further, that the French admiral was waiting for three more of the line and Duquesne himself before he made his final attempt to get away. Then it was the British admirals decided to take a more active line, and play a bold stroke to intercept Duquesne. The wind had come westerly, foul for La Clue to pass the Straits. Their reinforcement, however, had not arrived. It was still unsafe to divide the fleet, and determined, if possible, to prevent the junction, they resolved to run the risk of endeavouring to interpose the whole of it between the two French squadrons. The movement was finely conceived. With the wind as it was they calculated they might get off Cartagena before Duquesne, while if the wind came easterly again they would be able to get back to Gibraltar before La Clue could reach it.

[1] For Osborne's despatches see *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters* (*Mediterranean*), 384.

[2] A full account of this abortive movement of La Clue's is in *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters* (*Intelligence*), 3944, p. 117.

The decision was taken in the last days of February, and meanwhile Duquesne had sailed from Toulon. On the 25th he was off Cartagena with no hostile fleet in sight, and he signalled La Clue to come out. But La Clue was the senior officer, and such was the unhappy tone of the French service at that time that his dignity prompted him to insist on Duquesne's coming in to him. For three days, it seems, they argued the point, and then, on February 28th, as Duquesne was endeavouring to obey his chief's orders, a bit of a gale blew him off straight into the arms of Osborne and Saunders.[1] Duquesne immediately signalled for his squadron to disperse, but Osborne was as prompt. Two or three chasing ships were detached after each French unit, and with the bulk of the squadron he himself got off Cartagena to hold La Clue while Duquesne's business was settled. With the two smaller French ships it was soon over. By seven o'clock Captain Storr in the *Revenge*, supported by the *Newark* and *Preston*, had taken the *Orphée*, 64. The *Oriflamme*, 50, was forced ashore under a Spanish battery, and there had to be left alone for neutrality's sake. With Duquesne himself it was another matter. His flag was flying in the famous *Foudroyant*, an 80-gun ship, around which clung the pride of the whole French navy; for it was she that had carried Galissonière's flag to victory before Mahon. It so happened that one of the vessels told off to chase was the *Monmouth*, a little ship of 64 guns. She was commanded by Captain Arthur Gardiner, who had been Byng's flag captain when the *Foudroyant* won her laurels. For him there was but one quarry, and, thirsting for revenge, he quickly got his teeth into his big

[1] Intelligence from Toulon, March 9, *Admiralty Secretary*, *In-letters*, 3944. The account of the dispute between the admirals is confirmed by a French officer in Cartagena, March 1. *Ibid.*

adversary. The French said it was like David and Goliath. Duquesne made for the open sea, and Gardiner, careless of the risk he ran, and bent only on retrieving the prestige of his service, was soon out of sight. Through the deepening darkness the action went on furiously, till about nine o'clock Gardiner was killed. But that was far from the end. His first lieutenant was Robert Carkett, who had joined the service as an able seaman, and afterwards ruined Rodney's action of 1780 by failing to understand his signals. But if he had the brains of a bulldog he had the heart of one too. For three more hours he clung on stubbornly, till by one o'clock in the morning both vessels had fought to a standstill, and lay helpless side by side upon the sea. Then at last the *Swiftsure* and *Hampton Court*, who had been steering for the sound of the guns, were able to come up, and Duquesne hauled down his flag. So ended a very famous fight, and so the renowned *Foudroyant* passed into the British navy with Carkett for her first British captain.

The actual loss which the French suffered in this well-managed affair was only two ships. But its moral effect and its strategical consequences were of the utmost importance. It was Duquesne, it must be remembered, who, as Governor of Canada, had given his name to the famous Ohio fort, where the rivalry of the two opposing empires had kindled into world-wide war. It was he who thus personified the vast Colonial dream of France, just as his renowned ancestor personified the glory of the new-born French navy under the Grand Monarque. That such a man should surrender such a vessel to a force so inferior, that Galissonière's flag-ship should fall to Byng's flag-captain, struck Paris as cold as it fired the hopes of London. At one stroke the

shame of Fort Duquesne and of Port Mahon seemed wiped away. As for the strategical consequences, they were at least as great. For with Duquesne's miscarriage all hope of getting La Clue out to Canada was abandoned, and in a month it was known that he was back in Toulon dismantling his fleet.

Severe as was the Mediterranean blow, the French had no time to recover from it before the other fell. On March 12th, the very day that Osborne was penning the account of his success, Hawke put out from Spithead with a small division of the Channel fleet. At the end of February intelligence had been received that a military convoy for Louisbourg and Canada was fitting out in three divisions at Brest, Rochefort, and Bordeaux, and that a fleet of ten East Indiamen was about to sail from L'Orient. Hawke was immediately ordered into the Bay with any ships that were ready, to see what he could do. He was to be away a month and then return for orders.[1]

When he started he had not even a frigate. Seven of the line were all he could muster. One was Boscawen's prize, the *Alcide*, and being his fastest ship, she was sent on ahead to look behind Belleisle. If she found nothing there, she was to go on at once to the Basque Roads. Hawke followed as fast as he could, but the month wore away with no success and little news. At last he ascertained from some neutrals and privateers that a convoy was certainly gathering in the Basque Roads. By this time he had been joined by another ship of the line and three frigates, and he determined to act at once. On the night of April 3rd he came to anchor off the Antioche Passage, and at three o'clock

[1] Hawke's "Orders for the Channel, Soundings, or wherever the services shall require," *Admiralty Secretary, Out-letters* (*Secret Orders*), 1331, March 5, 1758.

next morning weighed to lead his squadron in. At daybreak, however, a numerous fleet was seen some leagues to windward. It was apparently a section of the Louisbourg convoy making for the rendezvous. Hawke signalled to chase, but so baffling was the wind that the strangers easily escaped into Saint Martin in the Isle of Rhé. About noon therefore Hawke, seeing it was useless to go on, signalled for the line, and in this formation bore away direct for the Basque Roads. The wind was fresh and fair at N.N.W., and by four o'clock he was well inside, with a pleasant sight to reward him.

Off Aix lay five of the line, six or seven frigates, and some forty transports and storeships. Again the signal for general chase went up, but, determined to keep his fleet in hand, he took care, he says, "to preserve the line by verbal orders to the ship astern of me." By this it would seem that the *Ramillies*, his flagship, was leading. As he approached, the enemy began to cut and slip. At six o'clock the commodore himself made off as the *Ramillies* came nearly into range, and in half-an-hour, as the sun set, Hawke came to anchor with no water to proceed. But in truth he had done all that was needed. "At five next morning," he says, "I saw them all aground almost dry about five or six miles distant from us . . . many of the merchants and several of the ships of war were on their broadsides, and then I could not help regretting the want of fireships and bomb-vessels." Still he did the best he could. The French ships were all hard at work throwing their guns and stores overboard, so as to get over the mud-flats when the tide made again. Thus they escaped, but only at a sacrifice that completely demobilised the fleet. For, so soon as the tide made, Hawke sent his frigates in and cut away some eighty buoys by which the French had marked the

anchors and armament they had sacrificed. While this was going on he once more destroyed the works at Aix, which the French had been industriously reconstructing since his last visit. Then, leaving Keppel behind him with five sail to blockade Saint-Martin and Bordeaux, where the other two divisions of the convoy lay, he sailed for home, and by April 11th, just within the month allowed him, he was back again at Plymouth reporting how, for that campaign at least, he had wiped the Rochefort squadron, convoy and all, from the board.[1] Here again the actual destruction was not great. All the stranded vessels were salved; but the delay which Hawke had caused rendered it impossible to refit them in time to be of any use in America. Hawke and Osborne between them had completely covered Pitt's main offensive, and their success practically sealed the fate of Louisbourg.[2]

But it had done even more. For while it rendered impossible a concentration of the French squadrons at Brest, it left Hawke free to concentrate his whole force on the command of the Channel. To grasp the importance of this we must turn again to the political situation. The central fact, as we have seen, was that we were trying to make sure of Frederick by inducing him to sign a regular offensive and defensive alliance for the period of the war, and Frederick, it will be remembered, was hanging back because Pitt would only offer a subsidy, and refused British troops on the Continent or a British squadron in the Baltic. Pitt was arguing with more

[1] Hawke's despatch is in *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters* (*Channel*), 89, April 11. His orders to Keppel are dated April 8. The despatch is partly printed by Burrows, *Life of Hawke*, ch. vii.

[2] See the French report on the damage done by Hawke's fleet: "Elle ne nous à pas fait d'autre domage mais elle a retardi furieusement le départ de nos vaisseaux."—*Admiralty Secretary, In-letters* (*Intelligence*), 3947.

energy than ever that nothing could be so satisfactory to Frederick as the alternative which he himself had suggested—that is, a British army ready at any moment to alarm the coasts of France; and to this end he was bent on assembling transports and troops at the Isle of Wight, and in clearing the way for them to act. Just a week before Hawke's return he had issued an urgent order for all ships of the line then in commission to be got ready "to oppose French operations from Brest and Rochefort." To complete their crews every frigate was to be stripped, and a regiment of the line to be placed at the admiral's service in lieu of marines.[1] Hawke's success and his punctual return could not have been more opportune. The plan of operation which Pitt had in his mind, though approved by Ligonier, was encountering much opposition elsewhere. But now, with the whole sea free for the passage of such an expedition in any direction, the force of Pitt's argument was almost irresistible. For some time past it had been the burden of Frederick's grumbling to our ambassador that nothing of this kind had been attempted. "In several conversations," Mitchell wrote to Holderness some time after Berlin had been raided, "the King of Prussia has thrown out hints how easy he thought it for the English to make a descent of 20,000 or 25,000 men at Boulogne, Calais, or L'Orient which, if well conducted, might lay the city of Paris under contribution . . . and that he hoped as soon as the season permitted we would at least give all the uneasiness and jealousy possible to the French by either actually making, or seeming to make, a descent somewhere in France. This, he said, could not fail to have a good effect; and that by constantly alarming their coast they might be induced to draw off 20,000

[1] *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters* (*Sec. of State*), 4122, April 4.

or perhaps 30,000 from their armies."[1] Fully alive to the value of this kind of operation, if England could be induced to undertake them, Frederick began to recede from his original attitude as to the proposed alliance, and by the middle of March he had made up his mind to send a special envoy to England with authority to sign a convention without any stipulation for Continental service. The envoy Knyphausen arrived the first week in April, and so well were things going that on the 11th, the very day Hawke returned, a treaty was signed. Under its provision the King of England agreed to pay to the King of Prussia 4,000,000 crowns (£660,000) on demand, to be employed by him in increasing his forces for the common cause, and neither side was to make peace or truce without the other. To the treaty was attached a "Declaration," by which the King of England undertook to maintain a German army of 50,000 men, while one British regiment was to hold Emden till Frederick could secure East Friesland, and a division was to be detailed to make a descent on the coasts of France. In consideration of these promises, and of the British declaration of inability, Frederick gave up for the present his demand for a Baltic fleet.[2]

It was therefore of the utmost importance, as a guarantee of good faith, that an oversea expedition should be undertaken immediately. Four days after the treaty had been signed, sixteen battalions, including one from each of the Guards' regiments, were warned for foreign service, and ordered to assemble at a camp in the Isle of Wight by May 23rd.[3] No sooner was

[1] Feb. 9, 1758, *Memoirs of Sir A. Mitchell*, vol. i. p. 401.

[2] *Newcastle Papers*, 32,879, April 8.

[3] *War Office Marching Orders*, 45. The movement was to begin on May 1, and the routes were timed for the units to arrive in camp every day from May 11 to May 23.

this step taken than a new communication arrived from Frederick strongly insisting on serious enterprises being made against France. Even a demonstration, or "giving out" that one was intended, would be, so he once more urged, a valuable diversion for Ferdinand.[1] The timely news of what Osborne and Hawke had done left no ground for hesitation or delay. Pitt had now a degree of sea command which would justify even more than a raid, and it certainly was something more that was in his mind. Within a week of Hawke's return a meeting of the Secret Committee, or "Little Meeting" as Newcastle calls it, was held, at which "the expedition" was the first item of the agenda. By the end of the month the commanders had been named, and had been summoned to attend the committee to settle the general plan.

This took some time, for Pitt's ideas had enlarged from the notion of diversion by raid to something more like an eccentric attack; that is, he was no longer content to destroy and come away, he wanted to set up a continuing diversion by seizing some place and holding it at least for a time. It was the idea which underlay the great Elizabethan expedition to Cadiz, and, from a military point of view, the place which Pitt had in his mind bore a singular resemblance to the Spanish port. It was the famous privateer port of St. Malo. Situated on a rock whose only connection with the mainland was a causeway a mile long, it was an ideal spot to hold or retreat from at will. Anson and Ligonier supported the project, and so did the officers Pitt had chosen for the task, after a good deal of persuasion.[2]

[1] Frederick to Knyphausen, April 12, *Newcastle Papers*, 32,879.

[2] Anson, however, never really approved Pitt's policy of littoral warfare except as a means of forcing the French to sea, by placing them "under difficulties they cannot be relieved from but by risking their fleet."—Lady Anson to Lord Royston, May 25, *Hardwicke Papers*, *Add. MSS.* 35,376;

They were the Duke of Marlborough, Master-General of the Ordnance, who was selected to command in chief more perhaps for the prestige of his name than for his abilities, which were but ordinary, though he had certainly commanded a brigade with distinction at Dettingen. His second was Lord George Sackville, who at Fontenoy had led his regiment so far into the French camp that when he fell at its head his wounds were dressed in the King of France's tent. He was one of the best speakers in the House of Commons; and as he was highly regarded as a soldier both by Cumberland and Wolfe, whose colonel he had been, he must have had qualities that fully justified his appointment. The naval command was given to Howe, of whom Pitt had conceived a very high opinion since his behaviour at Rochefort, and it was given under circumstances highly characteristic of Pitt's methods.

Time was pressing. For it was not only Frederick but Ferdinand who still more loudly was calling for a diversion to be made. George II. had been urging him to continue his advance across the Rhine. Ferdinand had replied that his army and his supplies were too much exhausted, but as soon as he was in a position to move he intended to throw six or seven thousand men across to worry the French and hinder their preparation for a renewal of the invasion. But in order to give his intended movement its full effect he wanted a British demonstration against the coast of Flanders.[1] This with

and see *post*, pp. 273, 290). Pitt afterwards said the St. Malo objective was chosen by the generals and not by him, but Hardwicke said he had to work very hard to get them up to admitting there was "a degree of probability" of success.—*Newcastle Papers*, 32,880, June 18.

[1] "Il seroit en même temps d'un effet merveilleux si votre Majesté voulût faire par ses flottes des demonstrations sur les côtes de la Flandre. Elles forceraient l'enemi de degarnir son cordon sur le Rhin pour aller couvrir Dunquerque et les ports d'Ostende et de Nieuport."—Prince

little doubt was the most telling area for the diversion to be made from a purely strategical point of view, but there was a serious political objection. Flanders was Austrian territory, and we were not at war with Austria, and our important trade with Leghorn depended on our keeping on good terms with the Emperor. Still Holderness was able to assure him that something was being done to help him. Transport and artillery, he said, were already at the Isle of Wight, and seventeen battalions were under orders to concentrate there. They were to make a diversion expressly for him. "But," wrote Holderness, "to make the diversion useful it must be lasting, and accordingly we are seeking a place whence we can seriously hurt the enemy and maintain ourselves against a superior force, while keeping open our communications with the sea." He is obviously retailing to the Prince Pitt's own words, and in this letter we get clear evidence of the permanent nature of the intended diversion.[1]

It was three days after this letter was written that Howe's orders were made out. The idea of giving him the command of the transports and their convoy was suggested by Anson. Pitt, in his eagerness to be in time to help Ferdinand, had determined to send him down to Portsmouth to hurry the lagging preparations, regardless of Hawke's feelings. Anson apparently protested that he could not go without a definite command, and accordingly, on May 8th, a commission was made out for him. For some reason the King's signature could not be obtained

Ferdinand of Brunswick to George II., April 21, *S.P. Foreign* (*Military Expeditions*), 90. This proposal had been suggested to him by Frederick, who had also given Knyphausen instructions to press it on the British Government.—Frederick to Ferdinand, April 12 ("The English are as stubborn as the devil," &c.); same to Knyphausen, April 12, *Politische Corr.*, vol. xvi. pp. 376–8.

[1] Holderness to Ferdinand, May 5, *S.P. Foreign* (*Military Expeditions*), 90.

immediately, but Pitt was too impatient to wait for it. He sent word to the Admiralty that he trusted the informality would not delay Howe's starting on his journey, and that no "official delicacy would retard it, or render it ineffectual."[1] So it had to be done. "Pitt's overbearing superiority," as Newcastle lamented at this time, was increasing with the strain of war, and down Howe went to Portsmouth, with authority to take command of a squadron of three of the line, a dozen frigates and sloops, and all the fireships, bomb-vessels, and transports "prepared for the secret expedition." And not only this; but he was to receive his orders direct from Pitt himself, and he carried directions to Hawke that he was to provide him with everything he wanted. Hawke, of course, was furious. Believing that the intended expedition was for a new attempt against Rochefort, he regarded Howe's appointment as an insupportable slight. Unable to restrain himself he struck his flag, and sent up a dignified protest to the Admiralty. "Sir," he wrote on May 10th, three hours after Howe's arrival, "about four o'clock arrived here Captain Howe and delivered me their lordships' orders of the 9th. In last September I was sent out to command an expedition under all the disadvantages one could possibly labour under. . . . Last cruise I went out on a particular service almost without the least means of performing it. Now every means to ensure success is provided, another is to reap the credit. . . . He is to make his demands and I am to comply with them. I have, therefore, directed my flag to be struck. . . . For no consequence that can attend my striking it without orders shall ever outbalance with me the wearing it one moment with discredit." Insubordinate as Hawke's be-

[1] Robert Wood (Pitt's Under-Secretary) to Cleveland, *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters*, 4122, May 9.

haviour was, no one was found to be hard on him. His provocation was great, but what to do no one could tell. He had come up to London, and was immediately summoned before the Board for an explanation. It became clear at once that the pith of the trouble was his belief that the objective was his own particular sphere at Rochefort. He was quickly disabused. Whereupon he at once acknowledged that he had acted hastily, and made "proper submission." Fearing, however, that his action would "spread an improper spirit of discontent in the fleet," the Board refused to reinstate him in chief command, and decided that some one else must be appointed. It was Anson who came to the rescue. Old as he was, for the sake of the discipline of the service he consented to go to sea once more to take Hawke's place. Hawke expressed his earnest desire to serve as second under his old chief, and so the awkward incident came to an end with Hawke rehoisting his flag.[1]

Hawke was not the only authority that saw in the Basque Roads the best field for a diversion. Wolfe, who was now on the other side of the Atlantic, took the same view. After he had heard at Louisbourg that his friend Sackville was going with an expedition, he wrote him a letter on the subject, which is of the highest interest as showing how wide and advanced was Wolfe's view of littoral warfare. "The Ministry of England," he said, "do not see that to possess the Isle of Aix with five or six battalions and a fleet is one of the most brilliant and most useful strokes that this nation can possibly strike. It stops up at once the harbours of Rochefort and Rochelle, obstructs and ruins the whole trade of the Bay of Biscay, inevitably brings on a sea fight which we ought

[1] Anson to Hardwicke, May 13, *Hardwicke MSS.* 35,359; Burrows, *Life of Hawke.*

by all means to aim at, and is the finest that can be made with a small force. . . . If you will honour me with the command of four thousand upon that island . . . I will establish myself in such a manner as to make it no easy matter to drive me out, and I am very sure the French would exchange Minorca or anything else to get it back."[1] The letter is indeed remarkable. So far as is known it is the first enunciation from a soldier of the true method in which the army should assist the navy in getting command of the sea. The French being the weaker afloat, had very properly taken the defensive with their fleet, and ours unaided was powerless to break that defensive down. What Wolfe saw was that the army could do what the navy could not. By seizing an island vital to the French position they must either suffer the consequences, both during the war and at the balancing of accounts when it came to making peace, or else they must take the offensive with their fleet and expose it to destruction. The idea was absolutely sound. As a strategical device it is so obvious, so powerful, and so exactly suited to our peculiar resources, that the only wonder is it has so seldom been put in force. How many occasions could be counted when we have been baffled by our enemy assuming a naval defensive, and how seldom have we adopted clearly and resolutely this simple means of "seeking out the enemy's fleet and destroying it." Anson saw it,[2] and so perhaps did Pitt. It was at least to this form of diversion, or rather eccentric attack, that he ultimately devoted the strength of his expeditionary activity. But at this time he knew what Wolfe did not know, that there were political reasons which deflected

[1] Wolfe to Sackville, Aug. 7, *Hist. MSS. Com.*, ix. iii. 77*a* (*Stopford-Sackville MSS.*)

[2] See *supra*, p. 265, *note*.

the course of pure strategy. The object of immediate importance was not the complete destruction of the enemy's fleet; but to exhibit a real effort to assist the war in Germany in order to keep Frederick content. For this purpose the diversion must be made as close as circumstances permitted to the seat of war, and our control of communications was sufficient to make such a diversion practicable without having secured a decision against the enemy's fleet.

It was with all this in his mind that Pitt settled his objective, and by the time Hawke rehoisted his flag it had been formally accepted by the soldiers. The army was gathering round its headquarters at Carisbrook Castle in numbers which placed the enterprise in quite a different category from that of the previous year. Thirteen battalions of infantry were finally detailed for the expedition, but besides these there were nine troops of light dragoons, three companies of artillery, and a large siege-train—in all some 13,000 men without the marines of the fleet. This was a force equal to eccentric attack. The report of Ligonier and the generals to Pitt show exactly the nature of the operations intended. Assuming, so the report runs, an intention to make a diversion for the grand operations, "without going at too great a distance from this country," they advise a descent near St. Malo. Regular siege operations against it were impossible, but it could be taken by bombardment and escalade. Retreat was safe, and it would take a powerful army to dislodge the force if it once got in. If it could not be taken they could still entrench themselves before it and preserve communication with the sea, while they raised contributions, burnt shipping, and forced the enemy to march to the relief of the place. When obliged to re-embark they

could range along the coast as high as Boulogne, landing or threatening to land in different parts, and forcing the enemy to keep a great force on the coast. In other words, if the attempt failed as an eccentric attack, it would still act as a powerful diversion.[1]

The care with which the enterprise was organised, was on a par with its more ambitious intention. As Hawke had said, every means to insure its success had been provided. No better found expedition or force more carefully trained had ever left our shores.[2] Commodore Howe's division as finally constituted consisted of five small ships of the line, ten frigates, five sloops, two bomb-ketches, two fireships, one hundred transports, besides storeships, cutters, and tenders, in all considerably over 150 sail. Anson's covering fleet numbered twenty-two of the line and eight frigates, so that all told there were something like 34,000 men upon the sea.

During the preparations Ferdinand continued to express his satisfaction and confidence in the project. "If their design," he wrote on May 14th, "can combine with that I have in hand, the effect will be all the greater." And again, on the 27th, on the eve of putting his daring movement into operation, he says he is confident the expedition will upset the French plans and probably

[1] "Report of the General Officers," May 11, *Newcastle Papers* (*Cabinet Memoranda*), *Add. MSS.* 32,998.

[2] The whole of the orders issued from day to day from the time Marlborough assumed command at Carisbrook will be found in a pamphlet entitled *A Journal of the late Campaign into France*, 1758 (*Brit. Mus.*, E. 2050). The arrangements for orderly landing, sanitation, &c., are very detailed. The following order is of interest as being the first, or one of the first, relating to army nurses: "The surgeon of each regiment that embarks to provide one nurse for the hospital ship (the *King of Prussia*), a sober woman that has no child to carry with her. Each of them will be provided with a complete set of bedding and the King's allowance of diet and 6d. a day wages."—Orders of the Day, May 24.

compel them to withdraw troops from the Rhine.[1] On June 1st, under cover of a feint at Düsseldorf, he put his army in motion, and on that very day—the day which Howe was destined to immortalise years afterwards—Anson made the signal to weigh from St. Helen's. He himself at once sailed westward with the battle fleet to take up a station off the north coast of Brittany, which would render impossible any interference from the French without an action.[2] It is significant of his advanced strategical ideas that no attempt was made to close Brest. Since he regarded the military expedition primarily as a means of forcing a decision on the enemy's main fleet, it was the last thing he would think of doing. For him the only policy was such an open blockade as would give the widest liberty of exit that was consistent with securing a real interior position. The situation clearly illustrates how the intention of a combined expedition controls the action of the covering fleet, or, in other words, how the major strategy of the war controls the minor strategy of the fleet. In Pitt's view the major intention of the St. Malo operations was to relieve the pressure on Ferdinand's army. For this purpose it should have been put out of the power of the French to meet the attack otherwise than by a detachment of military force, and this in its turn indicated a close blockade of the Brest fleet. For Anson, on the other hand, the major intention was to get permanent command of the sea by forcing a naval decision—that is, to tempt the French fleet to expose itself by offering it a chance of striking

[1] Ferdinand to Holderness, May 14 and 27, *S.P. Foreign* (*Military Expeditions*), 90.

[2] His secret rendezvous was five to fifteen leagues north of the Isle de Batz or Bas, off Morlaix. If not there, then "between Bas and Ushant, but never west of Ushant."—*Admiralty Secretary, In-letters*, 90, May 27.

the expeditionary force on the water: and this of course indicated an open blockade.

Anson's absorption in the idea of getting a decision and his deliberate exposure of the expedition to at least the possibility of naval attack are all the more remarkable when we know that he found his fleet, according to his own high standard, unfit to go into action. True, it was of overwhelming strength. It consisted of twenty-two of the line, of which no less than seven were three-deckers. But the fine old sailor, who should live as one of the fathers of modern tactics, declared that none of his officers had even an elementary knowledge of "discipline," as "tactics" was then called. "I do assure your lordship," he wrote to Hardwicke after he had been working them hard for six or seven weeks, "when I began to exercise my fleet I never saw such awkwardness in going through the common manœuvres necessary to make an attack upon an enemy's fleet at all. What we now do in an hour, in the beginning took eight. . . . Most of the captains declared they had never seen a line of battle at all, and none of them more than once." He must, he said, have some one under him "who will keep the fleet in a condition for service." Hawke had gone home ill, and possibly, as he had had the fleet before, Anson had no great idea of his training powers. The man he asked for was Saunders, and he had been called home from the Mediterranean so that he might join the fleet before Anson left it, "and keep it," as he said, "in the Plan of Discipline I have found for it, and which is in a great part new." Saunders, he knew, would preserve "perfect discipline" in the fleet. "I should have pleasure," he said, "in going aboard it any time." And the man he wanted to second his favourite's efforts was Holmes. When we consider to how great an extent the fleet had

been in the hands of Hawke and Boscawen since the beginning of the war, this testimony to the limitations of those great names is startling. Hawke, as we know, had recognised the evil, and in the Mediterranean had done his best to cure it. But it is clear his success or his perseverance had not been great. Anson's testimony is not to be got over; for, by universal consent, no surer judge of naval merit ever lived, and nothing but the strongest feeling could have dragged from his reserve so free an expression of opinion. It is certain, moreover, that he had the highest regard for Hawke; for only a year before, when a vacancy occurred on the Board, he wanted it for him. Newcastle forestalled him, however, by getting the King to make a political appointment, and so deeply did Anson resent it that he seriously contemplated resigning.[1]

As Anson turned westward for his station, Howe made straight across the Channel. His intention was to proceed to Cancale Bay, on the eastern side of the St. Malo peninsula, but owing to the lagging of his huge convoy he had to anchor off Sark. This lost him all the next day, but by standing out to sea again he avoided observation till he made the land on the 4th, and by two o'clock in the afternoon the whole fleet was anchored in Cancale Bay. Then not a moment was lost. The enemy had had notice enough already, and by this time British officers had at least learnt how greatly success in these operations depends on quickness. While the transports were still coming to anchor, Howe and Marlborough ran close inshore in a cutter, to reconnoitre in person. The result was a decision to land immediately at the little harbour of La Houle. It was

[1] Anson to Hardwicke, June 29, July 22, and Aug. 20, 1758, *Hardwicke Papers*, 35,359.

commanded by a small battery, but Howe would see to that after his manner. Hoisting his broad pennant in the *Success*, of twenty-eight guns, and accompanied by four similar vessels, he ran himself aground under the French guns. They proved quite insignificant and were quickly silenced. By nine o'clock he could signal for the troops, and the landing began like a parade. First the grenadier companies of all the regiments who had been waiting in the fleet boats for Howe's signal. Their duty was to seize the landing-place and every point of importance about it. This done the drums beat again, and the whole brigade of guards, whose boats had been advancing in support, pushed after them and landed in perfect order. Cancale itself was occupied and entrenched, while the boats returned for another embarkation. Thus before night two whole brigades were ashore, and the landing-place secured. It had been little more than a parade, for the surprise was complete. Three companies of dragoons and some militia were all the French had been able to collect, and they were in no case to offer resistance.[1]

Next day was devoted to landing the cavalry and field-guns with the rest of the army, and in forming an entrenched camp on which to retreat. On the 7th the advance began, and before evening, while the army was camping on the heights of Paramé overlooking St. Malo, Marlborough was able to ride forward and make a close reconnaissance. Below him, south of St. Malo, he could see the little port of St. Servan. The quays and slips were crowded with shipping, and they were out of range of the St. Malo guns. He saw his chance, and for the light horse that night there was no repose. Each armed with a torch, so soon as darkness had settled down they

[1] Pajol, vol. vi. p. 323.

stole into the defenceless suburbs, with infantry in support, and began their work. Ship after ship was silently fired; stores, rope-walks, and shipyards followed, till the night was red with the holocaust. Not a stick escaped except one privateer that was lying out in the anchorage. Thus perished at St. Servan four king's ships of from fifty to eighteen guns on the stocks and sixty-two merchantmen; and at Solidore, hard by, eight fine privateers ready for sea and twelve other vessels, besides small

craft and an enormous quantity of timber, cordage, and naval stores. It was a real success, not so much for the damage it did the enemy—though we placed that at over three-quarters of a million, and the French at half a million—but for the protection it gave our trade by paralysing one of the most dangerous and active of the French privateer ports.

When it came, however, to the main operation it was another matter. To Marlborough's summons to capitulate the governor returned a proper answer, and the more the staff considered the little port the uglier it looked. It had been hoped to bring up the siege-train at once,

and after a bombardment to take the place by escalade as arranged. Everything had been prepared, but it was found there was no road fit for artillery from Cancale except by way of Dol, some twelve miles round. Marlborough was holding Dol with one battalion, but the intelligence gathered there of troops assembling raised an impression that there was no time to move the guns that way. Howe therefore took the frigates, bomb-vessels, and ordnance transports round to try to land the siege-train at St. Servan, but he found it impossible to get in, and the attempt had to be abandoned. Meanwhile from the outpost at Dol came continual information that they would not be left undisturbed much longer, and Marlborough decided it was time to re-embark according to the tenor of his instructions. Was the decision justified? It is difficult to say. It may be the circumstances as they presented themselves to the commanders left them no real choice. In these cases the judgment of the men on the spot must be treated with respect. And yet we should feel happier about it did we not know the military character of the man by whom the decision was really made. It was not Marlborough, but Sackville. Walpole tells us that he had so great an ascendency over his chief as to be the real commander of the force; and this was the man who in the following year was to end his career in ignominy at Minden, bringing shame on the whole British army as he fell. Walpole also tells us that already Marlborough and the troops generally were remarking that "Lord George Sackville was not among the first to court danger," and that Howe, "who never made a friendship but at the mouth of a cannon, had conceived and expressed an extreme aversion to him." "Pitt," wrote Anson when he heard of it, "said every-

thing possible to his generals to make them risk action," but though they were brave and their troops good, they had no confidence in themselves.[1] It is indeed difficult to believe that the resolution to let go so soon was wholly due to the necessities of the case.

So far as we can tell now, the risk of holding on another week would not have been great. They had struck between the Norman and the Breton systems of defence. At Granville on the one side and at Dinan on the other troops were being gathered, but the process was slow, and neither in numbers or quality do they seem to have been at all on a par with the force they were expected to dislodge. Ferdinand, moreover, had just heard that the whole Maison du Roi and the regiments of Hainault had been ordered to Brittany, but even these he did not consider would be enough to turn Marlborough out if he once established himself at St. Malo.[2] Till these troops arrived within measurable distance there seems no reason whatever why Marlborough should not have held his ground, even if he did not care to risk one bold attempt upon the town itself. He was obviously in a position to offer battle to the local forces, and had they accepted it they almost certainly would have been defeated. The importance of keeping the wound open was at any rate worth the risk, and if such a man as Wolfe had been in command we may be sure it would have been accepted. Unhappily there was no one at the head of the troops who was possessed of any real military judgment or fortitude — no one who knew how to weigh military risk against strategical gain. One faint-hearted idea

[1] *Memoirs of George II.*, vol. iii. p. 125; Anson to Hardwicke, June 29, *Hardwicke Papers*, 35,379.

[2] Ferdinand to Holderness, June 14, *S.P. Foreign* (*Military Expeditions*), 90.

possessed them all—the fear of being cut off from the sea. So without any due consideration of what they were giving up, the troops were at once marched back to Cancale, and with the same precision and regularity with which the army had been landed it was re-embarked. There was no interruption by the enemy, and by noon on the 12th the whole force was on board again in Cancale Bay, waiting for a wind to carry them to fresh attempts.

The full intention of the proceedings that followed is difficult to fathom. For more than a week the weather baffled every attempt to get out of Cancale Bay. The time was employed in constant reconnaissances of Granville. Both Howe and Marlborough landed, though no serious attempt seems to have been in contemplation. The idea probably was to force a concentration there. At all events, so soon as the weather permitted them to get to sea they made away for Havre, got out the flat boats, and displayed every intention of attacking it. The French and some English authorities believed that the attempt was abandoned owing to the force which Marlborough found confronting him. The general opinion in the fleet, however, was that Caen was the real objective, and this Howe confirms in a despatch in which he says it was only the weather that stopped them attempting Caen.[1] Finding the sea too rough for landing at such a place as Ouistreham, the port of Caen, they returned off the mouth of the Seine and threatened Honfleur. That they intended an attack at the very point where was the main Norman concentration is, of course, improbable. This again must have been a demonstration to confuse the enemy. Next day, which was the 28th, they again disappeared. M. de Harcourt, the commander-in-chief at

[1] *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters (Channel)*, 91, June 30.

Havre, was sure he had frightened them away from his district altogether, and that they would bear away for Brest, L'Orient, or Rochefort. It was not so. Where they did reappear was at Cherbourg, the most distant point in M. de Harcourt's own command. Although it was then but a small place of some 6000 inhabitants, its strategical importance had long been recognised, and for several years past extensive works had been in progress to make it what it has since become. The great basin, some jetties, and several forts were already completed, but it was, of course, still practically defenceless against any serious attack. It was the last day of June that the fleet anchored before it. Preparations for a landing were made immediately—the troops were actually in the flat boats ready to advance when a gale came up dead on shore. The troops had hurriedly to take to the transports again, and next day the wind increased so much that the anchorage was no longer safe. Forage and provisions, moreover, were running out; the troops, crowded in the ships on the short-voyage basis of one ton per man, were growing sickly, and Marlborough decided there was nothing for it but to run back to Spithead to recruit. There they arrived next day, to find that Saunders had just come in from the Mediterranean with Duquesne in his cabin and the *Foudroyant* and *Orphée* in his train. The happy omen of his famous prisoner and his famous prize was recognised by all, and, added to their own measure of success, it brightened the outlook and fired the bulk of the force with keenness to continue the work."[1]

[1] For the whole operations see *A Journal of the late Campaign*, 1758 (*Brit. Mus.*, E. 2050); *A Genuine Narrative of the Enterprises against . . . St. Maloe*, 1758 (Dedicated to Pitt. *Brit. Mus.*, 9210, E. 46); Beatson, vol. ii. pp. 167–172; Howe's Despatches, *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters*, 91; Pajol, vol. vi. 323.

CHAPTER XII

THE CONTAINING MOVEMENTS OF 1758

II. Extension to the Continent—Cherbourg—St. Cas

We have only to turn to what was happening on the Rhine to see how ill-timed was Marlborough's over-hasty retreat. Ferdinand's brilliant movement had been entirely successful. In the midst of their final preparations to renew the invasion the French had found their position broken in, and the initiative had passed to Ferdinand. We have seen how on June 1st, in exact time with Anson and Howe, he suddenly began to pass his army across the Rhine, close to the Dutch frontier. The surprise was complete. The French left was turned, and Clermont's line began to shrivel up. The emotion which it caused at Versailles was bad enough, but the fact that Ferdinand's startling movement synchronised with the sailing of the British expedition gave rise to still greater consternation. The plain inference was that some great co-operation must be in progress, and the only solution of its meaning was that Holland must at last have come to an understanding with her old ally, and that Ferdinand and the British force were going to join hands across Dutch territory. The fear was intensified by the fact that Ferdinand in passing the Rhine had actually violated Dutch soil, and Clermont hastily stripped Dunkirk of sixteen battalions and twenty squadrons of horse to garrison Antwerp, while twelve of the sixteen battalions

which had been ordered back to France to defend the coasts had to be kept on the Rhine, and a new army to meet the new danger was being assembled in Flanders.[1]

By the end of the week Ferdinand was at Cleves, with the offensive impetus of his force seriously spent, and yet, burning to push his advantage before Clermont could recover his equilibrium, he managed to advance to Sonsbeck, and was threatening to break in upon Rheinberg, where the French were trying to concentrate. Thence he wrote to Holderness explaining his position and hopes, and pressing more earnestly than ever for the continuance of Marlborough's operations. He is about to attack the force which is covering Rheinberg, "and if, at the same time," he says, "the great expedition to the coast of France succeeds so far as to oblige the court of Versailles to recall part of Clermont's army, I think I shall find myself in a position to resume the offensive."[2] To add to Clermont's trouble, Ferdinand had stretched his right down to the Meuse. The initiative was now entirely his, and it looked as if he meant to make the Austrian Netherlands the seat of war.

Thus it was that the news that Marlborough had landed at St. Malo came actually as a relief to Versailles. The fact that he had not proceeded to Flanders seemed to show that Ferdinand and he were not acting together, and thereon Marshal Belleisle decided, very rightly, that, come what might, he must not weaken Clermont's army to stop Marlborough. This seems to have been the only

[1] Pajol, vol. iv. pp. 240–1; *Memoires du Duc de Luynes*, vol. xvi. p. 453 (under May 25–6): "On ignore toujours l'objet du grand armement des Anglais. On imagine qu'ils veuleut se porter en Hollande pour soutenir leur parti et déterminer les Hollandois à se declarer contre nous." Maillebois, he says, had just been superseded in the command of "l'armèe qui s'assemble en Flandre."

[2] June 9, *S. P. Foreign* (*Military Expeditions*), 90.

reason why the attack on St. Malo did not operate as a diversion more than it did. Had it occurred a fortnight earlier—before Ferdinand's intention of passing the Rhine was suspected—there is reason to believe its effect might have been very different. Even as it was, if Marlborough, instead of letting go at the critical moment, had held on with a little more resolution, he might well have produced the effect which Ferdinand and Frederick, no less than Pitt, had hoped for. According to our intelligence from Paris, "the King, the Pompadour, and the Ministers were hurt beyond expression at what the English fleet had done at St. Malo."[1] Then, unfortunately, came the news that Marlborough was retiring, and on June 11th Bernis was able to write to Clermont urging him to attack the Hanoverian army at once as Belleisle was advising. "We are much reassured," he said, "about St. Malo. It may be hoped the Marlborough of to-day will not resemble the Marlborough of Queen Anne."[2] But Clermont could not harden his heart even to hold his ground. By June 15th he had retired to Neuss and Düsseldorf, leaving Wesel in the air, and abandoning all his magazines at Rheinberg. The situation was now getting serious, and both in London and Paris it produced a remarkable new departure. Belleisle, at the risk of offending Austria, found it necessary to recall the troops which had been detached from Clermont's army for the Upper Rhine, and to order Soubise to move to his left front and, by striking at Hesse Cassel, to force Ferdinand to repass the river in order to save his communications with Hanover.

At the same time, June 16th, news of the re-embarkation at St. Malo reached Pitt. At the earliest moment the

[1] *Newcastle Papers, Add. MSS.* 32,881.
[2] Waddington, vol. ii. p. 86.

Secret Committee was summoned to consider what fresh orders should be sent to Marlborough, and it was obvious the old struggle between the Continental and the amphibious schools would break out again. Pitt, so Newcastle told Hardwicke, was evidently for the expedition going back to try something against Brest or Rochefort, fearing Normandy was now too much on the alert. Newcastle believed Ostend or Dunkirk would be better, if the generals thought anything could be done there. As an alternative, he revived Ferdinand's original idea of a demonstration by the whole force off the Flemish coast, followed by landing four or five thousand men at Emden to join the Prince's army. Newcastle, if, indeed, it was his own idea and not Ligonier's, was probably right. The situation on the Rhine had grown too tense for any distant diversion to affect it. Nevertheless it was decided that the original programme should be carried out. Still Pitt was certainly shaken. After the Council had risen, Newcastle was surprised by his proposing to him, "in the best manner imaginable," that as soon as the expedition returned six thousand men should be detached from it and sent to join Ferdinand's army. Two days later he went a step further. The British cavalry were eating their heads off at home. To keep such troops, which we, and others besides, regarded as the heaviest and best in Europe, to passive defence, went against Pitt's energetic spirit.[1] They could not be used actively upon the sea like the infantry, and they were simply being wasted. Pitt therefore suddenly proposed that the "Blues," under the Marquis of Granby, and three regiments of dragoons, should be sent immediately to join Ferdinand. The King was delighted, and orders were given at once.

[1] W. Beckford to Pitt, July 10, *Chatham Corr.*, vol. i. p. 329.

The move was undoubtedly popular. The very day that Pitt made the decision Ferdinand had crowned his reputation with a victory, and he was the hero of the hour. Pursuing Clermont as he fell back from Rheinberg, he had reached Crefeld, abreast of Düsseldorf, when Clermont, goaded to action from Versailles, turned and attacked him. The result was a crushing defeat. Clermont had to fall back under the walls of Cologne, leaving Ferdinand to seize Rüremond on the Meuse, and commence operations against Düsseldorf. In England the news was received with transports of delight. London was illuminated. The old chivalry of the nation was awakened, and a generous desire to help so brilliant a captain began to replace the former horror of German warfare. Pitt was quick to strike while the iron was hot. The force for Emden was immediately increased, and by the end of the month it was resolved to send, besides the four regiments of cavalry already detailed, the Scots Greys and three regiments of foot. These units, with the regiment already in garrison at Emden, which was eventually replaced by a battalion of invalids, amounted to over seven thousand men, and General Bligh, an old officer of the late war, now unhappily past seventy, was summoned from Ireland to command them.[1]

This was the news which greeted Marlborough's expedition on its return. Its effect on the military staff was disastrous, and killed on the spot any heart they had left to continue their work. They had come home with nothing that could make a decent paragraph in the *Gazette*, and heartily disgusted with the privations and

[1] *Newcastle Papers, Add. MSS.* 32,881. The cavalry first detailed were twelve squadrons, numbering 2019; the reinforcements, *i.e.* the Scots Greys of two squadrons and three battalions of 1000 each, totalled 3484. —Holderness to Ferdinand, June, 27–30, *S.P. Foreign* (*Milit. Exped.*), 90.

discomforts of littoral warfare. To be employed scratching the French coast was bad enough when there was nothing else to do, but with the trumpets waking the memories of the *la grande guerre* it was intolerable. Every one was on fire to join the force for Germany, and there was a stampede of the general officers for London. Lord George Sackville went so far as to send in his papers, and beg to have his name struck from the staff because General Bligh had been appointed to the German command instead of himself. The commodore took care to be on the generals' heels. By July 5th he had seen Pitt and probably given him his opinion of Sackville. Pitt was as determined as ever to go on with his diversion, and Ferdinand, whose position increased in difficulty as he advanced, was begging for a continuance of Marlborough's operations more enthusiastically than ever. "I am persuaded," he wrote on July 4th to Holderness, "that nothing better can be done than continue the expedition as long as possible, above all if the Duke has the good fortune to get hold of a place on the coast."[1] Still it must have been evident to Pitt that a change in the military command was necessary if any good was to be expected. Indeed Marlborough, from his high position, was practically in a position to demand the Emden expedition for himself. At all events the change was made immediately, and Sackville of course followed his pliant chief.[2] On July 11th, only ten days after the return from Cherbourg, the whole thing was done, and on the following day Howe was back again at Spithead with orders to prepare the transports for the immediate re-embarkation of the troops. A week later poor General

[1] *S.P. Foreign* (*Military Expeditions*), 90.

[2] *War Office, In-letters*, 56, July 11, on which day Marlborough was officially informed the Emden force was under his command.

Bligh arrived from Ireland to find his billet occupied, and himself marked for the command of the expedition which Marlborough and Sackville had deserted. His first impulse was, like Sackville, to send in his papers, and it would seem that it was only earnest pressure in the highest quarters, and a strong sense of duty, that induced him to accept a charge for which his age alone entirely unfitted him.[1] Still anything was better than keeping the others against their will. For, as Lord Bute had written to Pitt when the retirement from St. Malo was first known, "the wisest plans may fail by timid execution, and the ablest counsels prove useless without willing instruments."[2]

The elimination of the unwilling instruments was not the only alteration in the expeditionary force. The transports which Howe had been told to prepare were for one brigade of infantry, which Pitt had immediately decided, even before the change of command, to withdraw from the expedition and add to the Emden force.[3] The change was strategically sound. What was now intended by the conjunct force was a diversion by raid pure and simple. For such an operation the force, as originally constituted, was unnecessarily strong. On the other hand, it was growing every day more important to assist Ferdinand directly with all the strength that could be spared. By the middle of the month it was known that Düsseldorf had capitulated to him, but there the good news came to an end. Clermont had been superseded by Marshal Contades, and the new commander-in-chief was already beginning to advance from Cologne. Soubise was in movement against Hesse; and, as Ferdinand com-

[1] *A Letter from L—t-g—l B—gh*, p. 25. See *note*, p. 298, *post*.
[2] *Chatham Corr.*, vol. i., June 16.
[3] *War Office, In-letters*, 56, July 7.

plained, instead of the army in front of him being reduced by the British diversion, as he had confidently expected, it was increasing every day.[1] So great was the tension of the Prince's position that the King made one more effort to get Howe's expeditionary force despatched to the Flemish coast. He wanted to see it attempt to surprise Nieuport. Pitt violently opposed the scheme, and even Newcastle had to confess that we had not troops enough or a general fit for such an attempt. Ferdinand, moreover, in begging to have the Emden force made up to ten thousand, had just particularly asked that it should be accompanied by "a powerful diversion on the French coast." So it was finally decided that Howe should return there "to keep them in hot water," and he received orders to embark by the 23rd.[2]

Not the least interesting feature of these strategical discussions as to the best means of employing the army oversea is the fact that the existence of the Brest fleet is practically ignored. No decisive action had been fought, yet the discussions assume that absolute freedom for oversea operations for which the destruction of the enemy's fleet is so often said to be an essential condition. The situation in the summer of 1758 helps us to state the case in its true terms. We had complete control of the lines of passage and communication which our combined strategy required, not because the enemy's fleet had been destroyed, but because it was in no case to disturb those lines. It was Anson who had secured the situation. All this time, while diligently exercising his command in fleet tactics, he had maintained his interior position off

[1] Newcastle to Hardwicke, Aug. 14, quoting a letter of Ferdinand's written July 15, *Newcastle Papers*, 32,882.

[2] Ferdinand to Holderness, July 13, *S.P. Foreign;* Newcastle to Hardwicke, and same to Campion, July 15, *Newcastle Papers*, 32,881.

the Isle de Batz, daring the Brest fleet to interfere. Conflans was known to be in command there, trying to get a fleet to sea, but the ravages of the epidemic which had been brought home from Louisbourg was still beating him. Anson's hope that the pressure of Marlborough's expedition would force him to sea was not realised. But the failure to secure a decision was due to the overwhelming strength of his force as compared with the shattered resources of Brest, and not to any radical defect in his strategy. He was still of opinion that as a method of breaking down an enemy's naval defensive and compelling him to resort to offensive action for which he is not strong enough, coastal expeditions had a certain justification, however impotent as military diversions. It was this view of them which gave him the appearance of endorsing Pitt's strategy. How he himself would have used the fleet and how forced the enemy to a decision we cannot tell, but he declares himself to have been really of the "Continental school." When he knew that Howe had returned, he wrote to Newcastle telling him he could hear nothing of Conflans, and feared that now there was no hope of his venturing to sea. Then he proceeded to banter Newcastle because he hears he is satisfied with the expedition. "Has anything happened," he says, "since the last time I had the honour of seeing you, that has altered your old-fashioned way of thinking about Continental measures? I firmly believe you have not altered your political creed, and are only an 'occasional conformist.'" Newcastle replied that he had not changed, and that he was now getting his way, with 9000 troops under orders for Ferdinand. Still, he added, he had always believed in simultaneous diversions, so the expedition was to go out again to Cherbourg and Morlaix, and perhaps 4000 men to the Bay of Biscay. Still, he says, "Conti-

nental politicians, as you and I are, will like the German scheme best."[1]

Newcastle's reply serves well to mark the difference of grasp between him and Pitt. Newcastle clearly has not got beyond the idea that there is something inherently clever in dividing your forces. Pitt, on the other hand, clung to concentration—concentration on the special object of the war in America. His scheme of diversion was justified in his eyes because moral and political considerations demanded a show of activity in Europe, and because in the defence force which he was compelled to keep at home he had the means of making diversions without in any way weakening his main attack in America. But in his eyes concentration of effort was just as necessary for the subsidiary operation as it was for the main offensive movement. Having decided to cover the main attack by diversions, his idea was to concentrate all the force available in order to make these diversions as formidable as possible. In this singleness of purpose he would certainly have persisted could he but have secured a loyal and capable general. It was only when it proved impossible to find a willing instrument to execute his policy that he consented to modify it by diverting part of the home force to direct operations in Germany.

It was the Emden force which first got to sea. As the movement of Soubise against Ferdinand's communications was developing, the French were watching the force that was gathering in the Thames with increasing anxiety. They had no doubt of its destination, and expected it to reach Emden by August 11th.[2] But such was the energy which Pitt had instilled everywhere

[1] Anson to Newcastle, "Royal George at Sea," June 27 (received July 6); Newcastle to Anson, July 7, *ibid.* [2] Pajol, vol. iv. p. 259.

that the whole force, except the "Scots Greys," were in the river by July 28th. But even so, they were unhappily too late to save the situation altogether. On July 23rd the Duc de Broglie, pushing on with Soubise's advanced guard, defeated Ferdinand's lieutenant in Hesse Cassel in a bloody action at Sandershausen. Hanover seemed open, and a panic promptly ensued. Once more the Government fled to the sea at Stade, and Ferdinand saw there was nothing for it but to repass the Rhine at once. His position was almost desperate, and he wrote begging for further assistance. He particularly desired that the English would at least take charge of 7000 French prisoners in Stade and send two more regiments to garrison it, with a squadron to blockade the rivers as before. The King immediately summoned the Cabinet, but nothing but the blockading squadron could be obtained. Pitt harangued after his manner against sending British troops to garrison Hanoverian towns. In any case they could only be had from Howe's expedition, and the menace of that expedition, he argued, was keeping 30,000 French troops in check. If more could be spared for Germany, he said, they would have gone long ago with the rest.[1] Fortunately the panic did not last long. So hard hit and so hard pushed was Soubise that for three weeks after the action he could not move, and by that time his chance was gone. By August 11th Ferdinand, by a series of most brilliant manœuvres, had repassed the Rhine with his whole force in safety, and three days later he had joined hands with Marlborough, who had pushed down from Emden to Coesfeldt in Münster. Thus at the critical moment Ferdinand's right was secured, and he was able to draw breath no further back than the original line of the Lippe.

[1] Newcastle to Hardwicke, Aug. 2.

The violence which Pitt had displayed in the Cabinet to save Howe's expedition was really unnecessary. It had already sailed; but so baffling was the weather that it was not till August 5th that it was anchored before Cherbourg. Meanwhile as early as August 1st, the same day the fleet got to sea, its presence had been reported there.[1] It was believed in the port that Howe's objective was Brittany, or somewhere in the Bay of Biscay, but as he was still hovering off Cherbourg, baffled by the "fluttering winds and calms" that prevailed, M. de Raymond, the governor, thought he had better prepare for an attack. By the time the fleet appeared he had gathered in the town three regular battalions, three more of militia, and 250 dragoons. The next day was spent by Howe and Bligh in reconnoitring, and on the 7th the fleet was moved to Marais Bay, about two leagues to the westward of the port. The frigates, sloops, and bomb-ketches were ranged close in along the shore, and the first embarkation got into the flat boats to land in face of the enemy. While they assembled the ships opened a fire upon the shore which quickly forced the French to take refuge in an adjoining wood. But there they found no rest. The mortars of the bomb-ketches were filled with pound balls, the old substitute for shrapnel, and these rained down upon the wood with such execution that the French were soon seen flying in confusion out of range. Howe immediately made the signal for the boats to advance, and in a short time the grenadier companies and the brigade of Guards made good the landing with very little loss. Every attempt to stop

[1] Pajol, p. 326. They thought they saw it on the 28th, but that was impossible. Possibly it was a detachment of Anson's fleet. He had seized the opportunity of returning to Plymouth for water on July 19, and he sailed to resume his station on the 22nd.

them was severely punished, and by the evening the whole of the infantry was disembarked. Early next morning the Light Dragoons and guns were landed, and an immediate advance on Cherbourg began. Everywhere the enemy retired before it. In a few hours the town and forts were in Bligh's hands, and the work of destruction could begin. For a week it continued, and while the quays and forts were ruined, the troops ravaged the whole neighbourhood with a recklessness that was in marked contrast to the order and discipline which Marlborough had maintained. Bligh, indeed, was showing himself wholly unfit for the command, and his quartermaster-general was worse. On the first night he had so mismanaged the camping that a night attack by the French would have had disastrous consequences. At Cherbourg itself things were just as bad till Colonel Eliott, the junior brigadier and future defender of Gibraltar, protested, and got the troops properly encamped on a site of his own choosing.[1] So disturbed was Howe at the hopeless incapacity of Bligh and his staff, an opinion in which the brigadiers thoroughly concurred, that he took upon himself to draw up a scheme for re-embarkation, which the general meekly accepted. He himself indicated the lines of the necessary entrenchments to cover the rearguard, tracing them in such a way that they could be flanked and their front enfiladed by the ships. He also insisted that in destroying the forts the landward faces should be left intact, so that our troops could use them till the last moment.[2] For the naval commander to undertake this work was an innovation, but it is a precedent well worth consideration. The last and most critical moments of a

[1] *Hist. MSS. Com.*, XI. iii. 72*b* (*Stopford-Sackville MSS.*).
[2] *Journal of the late Campaign*, 1758, p. 81, *Brit. Mus.*, E. 2050.

re-embarkation must depend ultimately on naval fire, and it seems only reasonable that the last line of defence should be designed in concert with the naval staff, and with this consideration at least as the dominant factor.

News of the success reached home on August 11. Pitt was highly elated, and immediately made up his mind to reinforce Bligh with two regiments of foot and some more dragoons in order to develop his raid into an eccentric attack. We have seen what stress Ferdinand had laid on the importance of actually holding some place on the French coast and operating from it. This was the one thing which he believed could force Belleisle to weaken Contades. Pitt was determined to do it if he could. Newcastle took fresh alarm. He smelt a new reaction against the Continental policy; but he was powerless to oppose. Pitt had a sword at his throat, he said, and he dared not object for fear of a storm of Germanophobia.[1] Newcastle's fears were soon removed, for the matter settled itself as he wished. At the first alarm from Cherbourg the Maréchal de Luxembourg, military governor of Normandy, had hurried to the scene in person from his camp at Granville, picking up the garrisons of St. Lô and Coutances on his way; and by the time the news reached Pitt he had assembled at Valognes, less than twenty miles from Cherbourg, a force of ten regular battalions and six of militia, besides two regiments of horse and one of dragoons.[2] He was not, however, ready for an immediate advance, and Bligh and Howe had time to complete their work. By the 15th it was done. The forts had been rased, and the splendid harbour works ruined. Nearly two hundred iron guns, with quantities of ammunition,

[1] Newcastle to Hardwicke, Aug. 14.
[2] Pajol, vol. vi. p. 329.

were destroyed, and twenty-four brass pieces carried off. Of twenty vessels found in the port two were laden with the spoil, and the rest burnt or scuttled full of stones to spoil the harbour. Besides all this destruction, the town and suburbs had been pillaged amid scenes of shameful brutality, for Bligh had been quite unable to get his troops in hand again after once letting them go. Yet for some reason Luxembourg failed to attack, and on the 16th the whole force, thanks to Howe's careful dispositions, was re-embarked without loss, leaving misery and desolation behind them. "The memory of this descent," wrote one of the wretched inhabitants, "will cause a shudder to the end of time to all those to whom history shall tell what we saw and suffered." [1]

By the French, who were straining every nerve to force Ferdinand back, the shock was severely felt. Alarm and confusion spread all along the coast, and letters poured in upon Belleisle at Paris lamenting the inadequacy of the coast defence forces.[2] But Howe allowed them no rest. On the 19th he reappeared at Portland. Pitt stopped the intended reinforcements and gave up the idea of holding Cherbourg, but ordered the expedition to get to sea again as soon as possible. By the 31st it was off again, and three days later the news spread far and wide that Bligh had landed at St. Lunaire, just to the westward of St. Malo.

Who it was that suggested a second attempt on a place which had already been so well put upon its guard is not known.[3] Howe had an idea that by running the

[1] Pajol, vol. vi. p. 328.

[2] Waddington, vol. iii. p. 248.

[3] There was a story at the time that Bute, Howe, and Colonel Clarke, the incapable quartermaster-general of the expedition, had settled on St. Malo without Pitt's or Newcastle's knowledge, but it does not appear to have been credited.—Barrington to Newcastle, Sept. 21, *Newcastle Papers*, 32,884. For map see *supra*, p. 277.

bomb-ketches into the Rance he would be able under cover of their fire to get the flat-boats past the batteries, and carry the troops over to the St. Servan side in the night. He could then open a deadly bombardment of the town from that position. A reconnaissance, however, proved that pilotage difficulties and the strength of the forts made the plan impracticable. While the reconnaissance was going on the troops were being disembarked, but by the time about seven thousand men had been landed the weather stopped the operation. So bad was the surf that no stores could be got ashore, and Howe himself was unable to return to the fleet. He proposed to Bligh that he should try to reach St. Servan, by crossing the Rance at Dinan, but Bligh refused to be separated from his artillery, and there was no alternative but to re-embark the troops. But where they were this was now impossible. So foul indeed was the weather that Howe, to secure the fleet, was obliged to take it round under the lee of Cape Fréhel. Thence he sent word to Anson's rendezvous to say that he was going to re-embark the troops from near St. Malo as soon as the weather permitted, and return to St. Helen's for recruits and water, and await further orders. This was to enable Anson, in accordance with the plan he had adopted, to return to Plymouth or Torbay to refresh while the expedition was not actually at sea.[1]

But on this question of re-embarkation there seems to have been a serious misunderstanding. "As soon as the ships were safe," wrote Sir John Irwin, colonel of the 5th Foot, who was in Bligh's confidence, "the commodore wrote to the general to let him know he could not answer for the safety of the ships in such doubtful weather, and therefore if he did not choose to proceed towards St. Malo

[1] Anson to Cleveland, *In-letters*, 90, Sept. 9.

by land, or had no other object in view, he desired to know when he would embark the troops. The general returned for answer that he was ready to embark immediately. The commodore proposed our marching to an island near us which we could get to at low water, where we could lie safe from the whole army of France, and from whence we could embark with the greatest safety to the ships and troops. This, we all understood, was to be executed, but, to our great astonishment, when we began to march we found ourselves going from the coast into the country. The generals began to inquire into this, and were told that the best place to embark at was a bay about four leagues off, which this was the best road to."[1]

This was the little bay of St. Cas, near Matignon, and close to where Howe was lying. It could be reached without the army ever really losing touch with the fleet, and with ordinary military precautions there was no reason why the march should not have been performed with perfect safety. Bligh's new idea seems to have been to endeavour to move along the coast as far as San Brieuc and embark there, or, if that were found impossible, to set up a continuing diversion by establishing himself at Matignon, in touch with the fleet, as long as he safely could.[2] As the object of the expedition was to

[1] Sir John Irwin to Lord George Sackville, *Stopford-Sackville MSS.* (*Hist. MSS. Com.*, IX. iii. 73). This detailed letter is of great value as being hostile to Howe, to whom all the other accounts are favourable. Irwin was a protégé of Lionel, Duke of Dorset, the friend of George the Second and father of Lord George Sackville. By the Duke's influence Irwin had been given the command of the 5th (his father's old regiment) in 1752, when he was only twenty-four and had seen no service.

[2] See "*A Letter from the Honourable L——t-G——l B——gh to the Rt. Hon. W——m P——t, Esq.*" &c., 1758. The authority is doubtful. Bligh publicly disowned it as not being his letter and containing many things he did not approve of. But there was a belief that it was founded on a genuine letter, and that the narrative of the operations was really Bligh's, and the reflections interpolated by the anonymous pamphleteer.

attract the enemy's forces, the idea at least was sound enough. But by this time the incapacity of the old general and the presumptuous confidence of his quartermaster-general were displayed to their full degree, and the demoralisation of the troops which the excesses at Cherbourg had caused was complete. Without scouts or outposts, with no attempt at proper cohesion, ill-shod, half clothed, and short of food, they stumbled along encumbered with sick, through a close country, while the Duc d'Aiguillon, Governor of Brittany, was hurrying from Brest to meet them. On the evening of August 8th, after losing a good many men by harassing attacks of armed peasants and small parties of the enemy, Bligh had reached Matignon, about three miles from St. Cas. Here, instead of pushing on for the fleet, his foolish quartermaster-general persuaded him to camp. In the night a deserter informed him, to his great surprise, that the Duc d'Aiguillon was at Lambale, a few miles off, with a dozen line battalions, two or three thousand militia, six squadrons of cavalry, and eighteen guns. There was still plenty of time to slip away to the fleet and embark comfortably in the morning under its guns. But the cup of futility was not yet full.

Instead of striking camp in silence, the *générale* was beat in the dead of night, as though to give D'Aiguillon notice of their intention, and he was able to start in pursuit within a few minutes. Even so, had the staff-officers shown any sign of knowing their duty all would have been well. As it was they were hours covering the few miles to the beach, and no arrangements whatever

See "*An Examination of a Letter published under the name of L——t-G——l B——gh*," &c., 1758. The original pamphlet is in any case an ably-reasoned defence of Bligh, written by some one who had a full grasp of Pitt's strategy.

were made to protect the embarkation. Howe was there ready for them, and began to get the troops off at once. The boats, however, were soon under D'Aiguillon's guns, but for some time the fire of the frigates and bomb-ketches prevented the French developing an attack. It was not till nothing but the rear-guard was left on the beach that they succeeded in stealing down a lane, which formed a natural covered way secure from the ships' fire. Here our grenadiers attacked them as they debouched upon the beach, and even then they might have been severely punished and driven back had elementary dispositions been made, but everything had been neglected. The grenadiers were overpowered by numbers, and all was quickly in confusion as the French manned the sandhills and poured in a distracting fire. The officers behaved splendidly, and were cut down in numbers. The sailors performed prodigies, as the soldiers frankly confessed. At one time, it is true, they hesitated to approach the wild confusion on shore, but Howe in person at once thrust his boat into the thick of the fire to take off all he could, and his example was followed with enthusiasm. The soldiers themselves did well enough till their ammunition, which had not been renewed in the morning, was spent. Then they began to break and take to the sea. Some hundreds, however, withdrew to a rock, where they stood valiantly till their last cartridge was fired. Seeing further effort was useless, Howe signalled the frigates to cease firing, and the French at once gave quarter to all who were left ashore.

It was a humiliating and unhappy blow, if only because it was so unnecessary, and because it went far to condemn for ever a policy which above all others was suited to the British resources, and which the greatest minds of that age approved. Yet the failure was purely tactical,

and the actual loss not great. What it was exactly is difficult to say. A rigid censorship was established, and the military despatches are lost.[1] The French, in order to allay the panic that the coastal attacks were causing in the country, rightly exaggerated the blow to the utmost limits of credulity. Pitt, on the other hand, did his best to minimise it in order to save the credit of his system. The French put the total loss at from three to four thousand men, the English at a little over eight hundred; but this return, according to officers present, did not include all the wounded. The total probably amounted to about a thousand. Of these the French official account claims over six hundred prisoners, and as it also admits a French loss in killed and wounded of four hundred, of whom a large proportion were officers, it would seem that the French army suffered quite as severely as our own.[2]

[1] On Sept. 21, from the Isle of Wight, Sir John Irwin wrote to Sackville: "We have for some time past been treated like people guilty of high treason. We have not only been confined, but in effect debarred the use of pen, ink, and paper. For the two last expresses that left the fleet carried only the general's and commodore's letters, notwithstanding people gave assurance that their letters contained no news, only accounts of their health. Yet these assurances had no weight. I do not say the caution of our leaders was wrong," &c.—*Hist. MSS. Com.*, IX. iii. 72*b*.

[2] Waddington, vol. iii. p. 351, quoting *Archives de la Marine*, B. 4, vol. 78. The account gives the strength of the British rear-guard at 900. It consisted of thirteen grenadier companies and four companies of the First Guards (*An Impartial Narrative of the last Expedition to the Coast of France, by an Eye-witness*, Brit. Mus., E. 2050). Sir John Irwin says the Guards lost 12 officers, 9 sergeants, and 225 men wounded and missing; that his own regiment had 20 wounded that were not returned; and that the other grenadier companies were "about cut in two." *The Journal of the late Expedition*, Brit. Mus., E. 2050, gives the loss at about 1000. Beatson (vol. iii. p. 184) gives the following return, which, he says, is allowed to be the most exact account of the loss of the British army and navy on this occasion: "Officers of the army killed, wounded, and prisoners, 37; officers of the navy, 5; sergeants, drummers, and rank and file of the army, 750; seamen, 30; total, 822." Howe's despatch (*ibid.*): "1 lieutenant killed, 2 midshipmen wounded, and 4 captains

Considering the hazardous nature of such expeditions, and their inherent risks, the loss was really not great compared with the effect that had been produced, and considering three descents had actually been made. It is usually said that as diversions in favour of the war in Germany the operations were of no effect. We know that Ferdinand was disappointed that they did not seem to reduce Contades' army to any serious degree; but on August 31st he told Holderness that the French had sent back to France fifteen of their most shattered battalions, with some regiments of horse and dragoons, to be reformed. "Maybe," he adds, "the expedition of my Lord Howe on the coasts of France had its share in this resolution."[1] But this was not the important point. Even after Ferdinand found Contades' army was not being reduced, he still pressed for the continuance of the expeditions, "to keep the French forces divided." So long as the threat continued he knew the coast armies could not be used as a reserve for the grand army. It was here the effect of Pitt's idea was most strong and direct, and penetrated most deeply into the German seat of war. It was because Contades could not be reinforced from France that Soubise had to be diverted from his intended junction with the Imperial army, and the failure of this junction undoubtedly afforded a substantial relief to Frederick at a very critical time. The actual force which Howe's littoral operations had kept demobilised upon the coast is difficult to determine. Pitt always boasted it was 30,000,

prisoners (viz. Maplesden, Rowley, Paston, and Elphinstone, who remained to the last trying to get the men off), also 8 seamen killed and 17 wounded: total, 32." Howe's despatches are in *In-letters (Channel)*, 91: see especially those of Sept. 8 and 12. Pitt's instructions are *ibid.* (*Sec. of State*), 4122. The military despatches appear to be missing.

[1] *S.P. Foreign (Military Expeditions)*, 90.

or about thrice its own number. Probably this was not far from the truth. In Brittany alone D'Aiguillon had twenty-two battalions of the line, three of militia, and a regiment of dragoons.[1] In Normandy the force must have been at least as great. At Cherbourg, the most remote part of the province, we have seen the Duc de Luxembourg assembling in less than a week ten battalions of regulars, eight of militia, with two regiments of horse and one of dragoons; and all this must have been done without touching the force in the upper half of the province. Besides these units there were the troops of the Rochefort and Bordeaux districts, of Picardy and Artois, and finally of Flanders, where we have seen sixteen battalions and twenty squadrons taken from Dunkirk alone at a moment of pressure. It is indeed almost impossible that the coast-defence services can have consumed less than from seventy to eighty battalions of regulars; and including the Flemish garrisons, whose sole function was to face a descent from the sea, they may have been as high as one hundred. This is excluding cavalry and dragoons and the Gardes-Côtes, whose mobilisation caused so severe a strain on the productivity of the rural population. It may at least be asserted with confidence that had Belleisle been free to draw on these troops in the spring of the year to re-establish Clermont's army, Ferdinand's formidable movement across the Rhine, which saved Hanover for that campaign, could never have been made.

Yet in spite of the considerable strategical success that had been gained, Pitt found the tactical failures had set opinion too hard against him to persevere. His first idea was to try again. He was busy getting away an expedition against Martinique—a new development which

[1] Waddington, vol. iii. p. 349.

must be dealt with later—and his idea was that, in order to cover its departure, Howe should go down into the Bay and threaten Bordeaux. Within a week after his return, Howe, who in the meantime had succeeded to his brother's title, was at Portsmouth again, under orders to refit with all speed.[1] But this idea was soon abandoned in favour of concentrating the whole available military force on Martinique itself, and by September 19th Newcastle's mind had been relieved by a promise from Pitt that he would drop all other expeditions except a very small one to Goree and Senegal.[2] So ended, without really adequate cause, the first phase of Pitt's system of containing by conjunct operations. Even if it had not quite fulfilled its function as a diversion for Ferdinand, it had certainly played its part in securing a victory beyond the ocean, beside which the loss at St. Cas was scarcely worth consideration.

[1] *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters*, 91, Sept. 19, and Newcastle to Hardwicke, Sept. 17, *Newcastle Papers*, 32,884.
[2] Newcastle to Hardwicke, Sept. 19, *ibid.*

CHAPTER XIII

MAIN OPERATIONS, 1758—LOUISBOURG—FORT DUQUESNE—FRONTENAC

THE great plan of campaign in America, where, as Pitt reminded Newcastle in the midst of his Christmas festivities, "England and Europe were to be fought for," was an ambitious development of that of the previous year. It involved nothing less than an attack upon the entire French position from New Orleans to Quebec. But if Pitt's ideas of making war were grandiose, they were almost surpassed by the amount of methodical labour he put into working them out, and the speed and precision with which every detail was provided for. We cannot wonder, as to-day we turn over the mass of far-sighted orders that surged from his pen, that he almost broke down; nor that, masterful as he was, he uttered his wail for the assistance of the Cabinet. But, as we have seen, he did not get that assistance. Yet, a fortnight after his cry for help the work was done, and on January 9th and the two following days all the necessary orders were issued. To naval and military commanders at home and abroad, to Colonial governors, to heads of supply departments, to private merchants, and others who had special knowledge of the various theatres of operation, they poured forth in an astonishing volume, and nowhere is it possible to detect a moment's loss of grip, or a single detail forgotten.

The great attack was to be made on three main lines.

There was first a repetition of Braddock's attempt upon Fort Duquesne to recover the valley of the Ohio. This was committed to Brigadier John Forbes, colonel of the Scots Greys, who had been appointed commander-in-chief for the Southern Colonies. Though over sixty, he had been displaying a remarkable talent for Colonial warfare, and, what was much more difficult, an equal talent for dealing with Colonial authorities. The force assigned to him, consisting as it did of a strong regiment of Highlanders (Montgomery's), a battalion of the 60th or Royal Americans, and some four thousand provincials, was eminently suited to the kind of work that lay before him. The operation was, in fact, exactly the same which had beaten Braddock, except that Forbes intended to reach his objective from Pennsylvania instead of Virginia.

The second operation was to recover the line of lakes George and Champlain, which had been lost during Loudoun's attempt on Louisbourg, and to penetrate that way as far as possible towards Montreal and Quebec. To this operation, which was to be based on Albany and the Hudson, were assigned eight regular battalions, numbering over 6000 men, and 9000 provincials, with an elaborately organised flotilla. It was to be conducted by General Abercromby, the new commander-in-chief, who had succeeded to the post by Loudoun's recall. This arrangement was Pitt's one serious mistake in the campaign. Abercromby had never shown any real qualities as a soldier, and the only explanation of the appointment is that he was a good administrator, and that he had at his right hand Lord Howe, the commodore's elder brother, who exceeded even Forbes in his genius for Colonial leadership. He was, indeed, generally regarded as the soul of the force, and not only this, but he shared with Wolfe the reputation of being the most

promising officer in the King's service. "The noblest Englishman that has appeared in my time," so Wolfe himself called him, "and the best soldier in the army." Moreover, the force with which Abercromby was provided, compared with anything the French could bring against it, was overwhelming. For this time it was no question of acting on the defensive inland, and concentrating on the oversea offensive. A vigorous attack was to be pushed along both lines in all the strength which each required or could carry.

The third operation, which was to commence with a renewal of the abortive attack on Louisbourg, was the most important of the three; for although the military force assigned to it was numerically less than that of Abercromby, it was composed almost entirely of regular troops—fourteen battalions, numbering over 11,000 men. Moreover, it was to this force that was to be devoted all the available striking energy of the fleet, and its objects were proportionally far-reaching. The capture of Louisbourg was but its primary object. If this were achieved early enough in the year, an immediate blow was to be struck at Quebec itself by way of the St. Lawrence. If, however, the season were too advanced after Louisbourg had fallen, the commanders were to turn their attention to the minor French settlements both on the Canadian coast and in Louisiana on the Mobile River and the Mississippi.[1]

The way in which the fleet was to be handled is highly interesting, for it constituted a new departure which indicated a remarkable advance in naval thought. To realise what it meant we must first recall two principles

[1] "Additional Instructions" for Boscawen, Jan. 27, *S.P. Colonial (America and West Indies)*, 76; "Instructions to Amherst," *ibid.*, March 3. See also Thackeray, vol. i. p. 327 *et seq.*

which our long experience has shown to underlie the whole conception of naval strategy. One is that it is at bottom an affair of communications—that is to say, that every problem of naval strategy resolves itself ultimately into a question of attacking or defending maritime communications. It is necessarily so, because command of the sea means nothing but the control of sea communications. It is true that some authorities have spoken of it as though it were a question of "the conquest of sea territory," but upon this basis no right reasoning can be assured. The idea involves a false analogy in that the sea is not susceptible of territorial ownership. However completely we may command it, it is not ours; we cannot exclude neutrals from it; we cannot possess it; we cannot subsist upon it. The only value which the sea has in international relations is as a means of communication between states and parts of states. Whatever our strength, we can secure no more than this. The utmost, then, that we can acquire at sea is something wholly different from the conquest of territory ashore, and to argue from the one to the other is to lay a course to certain error. In maritime warfare the control of communications takes exactly the place which in the sister art is occupied by the conquest of territory; and when we say that the primary object of our battle fleets must always be the destruction of the battle fleets of the enemy, what we really mean is that the primary function of our battle fleets is to seize and prevent the enemy from seizing the main lines of communication.

The second underlying principle which differentiates naval from military strategy is the outcome of a radical distinction between land and sea communication. Whereas on land the respective communications of the

two belligerents start from widely separated bases and approach each other from more or less opposite directions till they meet at the decisive point, at sea they are usually parallel, if not identical. Thus, in the war we are considering, our own lines of communication with the seat of war in India and in America were practically identical with those of the French. It is a condition which cannot exist in land war, and is yet inseparable from maritime wars—that is, from all great Imperial wars which involve communications by sea. The practical effect of this distinction is that we have to approach strategical problems at sea from the outset in an entirely different way from that in which we treat similar problems ashore. From the general nature of communications ashore, the normal condition is that an army covers its communications as it advances. If we wish to strike at our enemy's communications, we must in some way or other move round his flank away from our own true line of advance, and in so doing the tendency is that we uncover our own communications. Consequently, where forces are approximately equal it must usually be a question whether it is advisable or not to direct our operations against the enemy's communications. At sea this condition cannot arise. For in that at sea the great lines of communication are roughly identical, we cannot defend our own without attacking those of the enemy. Thus in maritime warfare there can never be a doubt, assuming we have reasonable strength, what is the right opening to make. It must always be to get our battle fleet at once into such a position that it occupies the common lines of communication, and so compels the enemy either to accept the situation or to break it down by battle.

These two conceptions, which may be called the "com-

munication" theory of naval strategy, will be found to be at the bottom of most of the traditional maxims of the British service. Such, for instance, as the maxim that the proper place for our fleet is off the enemy's ports, that the enemy's coast should be made our frontier, and the like. The real justification of these somewhat crude ideas is that they are an expression of the best means of seizing the common communications—that is to say, that the most effective way of controlling them is by occupying their base and their objective ends with a battle fleet. This also, as we shall see, was the idea which underlay the strategical advance that Pitt and Anson were now inaugurating.

We have already seen how, in the home theatre, after the opening expedition against Rochefort, the same principle had been adopted of keeping the expeditionary force distinct from its covering battle fleet. In the oceanic theatre the principle was extended and carried to its logical conclusion. For the first time in trans-oceanic warfare no regular expedition was formed under the protection of a great naval force. The North Atlantic was treated as a partially commanded sea over which we could pass transports at will under mere commerce defence convoy. Instead, therefore, of organising a great combined force in the home ports, there was to be a concentration of troops at Halifax from various points. Some had wintered in Nova Scotia, others were in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston, and for them transports had to be sent out from home. Besides the forces on the spot, which had taken part in the late attempt, fresh troops were to come from England, and others again from Ireland. Three distinct convoys of stores had also to be despatched to the sea bases of the three lines of operation, Philadelphia, New York, and Halifax. All went out in de-

tachments as they were ready, just as though they had been commercial convoys, and the battle fleet was left free to perform its functions entirely unencumbered with escort duty.

The plan was a bold one, for it cannot be said we actually had command of the sea. No action had been fought when the plan was designed, and the French were known to be working for a naval concentration in American waters. Of the process of thought by which Pitt and Anson settled the design not a trace remains. All we can know is the main considerations that must have been in their minds. To begin with, we must remember that the success, which had hitherto attended the French plan of passing troops and stores to America in small detachments under convoy over a sea not absolutely commanded, went to show that it was a fair war-risk for a great object. For us, moreover, there were considerations which rendered the probabilities of success even greater. Apart from the ordinary chances of evasion, always great over so wide an expanse of sea, the experience of the late campaign had shown that a French concentration upon Louisbourg was so difficult and absorbing a movement that the various squadrons engaged in it must fix their whole attention upon the one object of getting through to their rendezvous, and that no erratic movements to intercept British convoys would be made until some time after the concentration was complete. We must also remember that the failure of Loudoun's campaign had been due to the fact that the battle fleet had been held back to escort the transports, with the result that it did not get off Louisbourg in time to deal piecemeal with the French detachments which escaped the blockading fleets at home. Its detention was quite unnecessary, and points to the survival

of primitive strategical ideas. The danger to transports passing over an uncommanded sea of large area is really inconsiderable, except at the points of departure and arrival. If these two areas be commanded, the operation of passing transports between them under ordinary convoy—protected, that is, against cruisers—is as free from risk as any operation of war can well be. Now in 1757 our Channel fleet adequately commanded the base area. To keep the Atlantic fleet also in that area was a vicious duplication of effort. Moreover, it condemned the Atlantic fleet to a pure defensive, instead of permitting it to exercise its true function and act offensively against the common line of passage and communication. The importance of clearly grasping the "communication" basis of naval strategy could want no stronger confirmation. Had this been better understood, the right course would have been clear enough. It would have been seen that while the Channel fleet held the home end of the line and covered the departure of the troops beyond the danger zone, the Atlantic fleet ought to be sent to seize the other end, so as at once to cover our own military concentration and resist the naval concentration of the enemy. In this way it would have discharged its double function of offence and defence upon the common line of passage, and would not have overlapped the corresponding function of the Channel fleet.

So much at least Pitt's instinct for war revealed to him. In his eyes the key of the whole design was to get Boscawen's fleet off Louisbourg so soon as ever the port was ice-free, and so forestall the French in the terminal area of the common communications. Time was of the essence of the strategy, and so it was that, in order to fix Boscawen to his main function, and free him from pre-

occupation, Pitt took the bold step of directing him to leave his main battle strength unhampered by convoy duty of any kind. So at least Boscawen interpreted his instructions. Compared with anything that had preceded it, it was a revolution. Were we to seek a formula to express the strategical advance it marked, it would be something like this: Where military forces have to be passed over an imperfectly commanded sea, the security obtained by seizing both ends of the line of passage with the battle fleet is out of all proportion greater than the risk of the transports being left to pass between the commanded areas without battle-fleet escort.

The importance which Pitt attached to the move is attested by the fact that it was the first order he issued for the campaign, and by the strength of the force he demanded. On January 5th, sixteen of the line besides cruisers were ordered to be brought forward for immediate service under Boscawen. These, with seven others that had wintered at Halifax, would give him a fleet of twenty-three of the line, as against twenty which the French were trying to concentrate at Louisbourg. From this force and its attendant frigates Boscawen was directed to supply convoy for the various contingents of transports. He was also directed to send out to Halifax immediately his second-in-command, Sir Charles Hardy, to command the squadron there, and establish a preliminary blockade of Louisbourg at the earliest possible moment. Commodore Durell, the third flag-officer, was likewise to go forward with transports and drafts for the New York contingent. Subject to these general directions Boscawen had supreme command, not only of the fleet, but of the whole of the transports engaged, and was at liberty to make his own arrangements for conducting the great operation. After providing for the various convoys

he found himself left with a compact force of ten of the largest ships of the line and five or six frigates, and with nine of these, after many delays, he finally cleared the Channel on February 24th, with all the principal convoys for collecting the military force far ahead of him, but still in time to reach the point of concentration before them.[1]

Amherst, who it will be remembered had been summoned from Germany to command the Louisbourg operations, had not arrived even then. But with Boscawen sailed Wolfe, who had been appointed a brigadier with Colonel Lawrence, the governor of Nova Scotia, and Colonel Whitmore, who was in charge of the New York contingent, for his colleagues. It is from Wolfe, as usual, that we get the hint of the new arrangement, which no one else appears even to have noticed. The voyage was so extraordinarily prolonged that Boscawen failed to be first at the point of concentration, and when at last it was done, Wolfe wrote to his old chief Sackville lamenting their unhappy fortune. "From Christopher Columbus's time to our own days," he says, "there perhaps has never been a more extraordinary voyage. The continual opposition of contrary winds, calms, or currents, baffled all our skill and wore out all our patience. A fleet of men-of-

[1] One of his best ships, the *Invincible*, took the ground and was lost near Dunose. The convoys he had to provide were: 1. *Amherst's regiment* from Portsmouth—*Dublin*, 74, and *Prince Frederick*, 64—the *Dublin*, returning after seeing the regiment past Finisterre. It had reached 42° N. lat. by Feb. 9 (Boscawen to Pitt, Feb. 19). 2. *Anstruther's regiment*, from Cork—*York*, 64. 3. *Transports* (9000 tons) *and drafts* for New York—*Devonshire*, 66, and two frigates. This convoy was ahead of No. 1. 4. *Ordnance stores* for New York and Pennsylvania—*Bedford*, 64. 5. *Ordnance stores* for Halifax (including siege-train) — Escort unknown. This convoy also arrived before Boscawen. For the whole of the orders under which the operation was conducted see *S.P. Colonial* (*America and West Indies*), 76, 79, and 81.—*W.O. Marching Orders*, 45; "Boscawen's Journal," *Admirals' Journals*, iii.

war, well manned, unencumbered with transports, commanded by an officer of the first reputation, has been eleven weeks in its passage."[1]

Amherst fared even worse, though in his case the delay was not entirely due to weather. So soon as he arrived from Westphalia he was hurried down to Portsmouth, and Rodney, who had come in with the *Dublin*, 74, from assisting to escort Amherst's regiment past Finisterre, was ordered to take him out. It was March 15th before they got away. As they passed Brest a large armed vessel was sighted, which was made out to be a French Indiaman. It was a chance Rodney was the last man to forego. Despite the pressing nature of his errand he gave chase, captured the prize, and took her into Vigo. She proved to be very rich, with 700,000 lbs. of coffee and other rich cargo, and Rodney, in reporting the matter to Grenville, then Treasurer of the Navy, took credit to himself for refusing to yield to his officers' persuasion to take her back to Plymouth. Still for nearly a fortnight he clung to his Indiaman in Vigo, as long after he clung to the *Ville de Paris* on an even more pressing occasion; nor did he proceed on his voyage till he found a small cruiser to take charge of his prize.[2] Considering that he was engaged in the special duty of carrying to the seat of war the belated commander-in-chief of the main operation of the campaign, the incident will hardly commend itself as a precedent to modern judgment.

[1] *Hist. MSS. Com., Rep. IX.* iii. 74*b*, May 12. Boscawen did actually start with three transports, but he dropped them all but one on the voyage for a frigate to bring on. See his Journal, *Admirals' Journals*, iii.

[2] Amherst to Pitt and Rodney to same, Mar. 15. *S.P.* (*America and West Indies*), 79; Rodney to Grenville, Mar. 15, *Grenville Papers*, vol. i. p. 231; and for the prize incident, Amherst to Pitt, Mar. 30, *S.P.* (*America and West Indies*), 79, and Rodney to Grenville, Mar. 29, *Grenville Papers*, vol. i. p. 233.

These unfortunate delays emphasise the importance of the work performed by Osborne and Hawke. When Osborne, in the last days of February, wiped La Clue from the board, Boscawen was scarcely beyond Finisterre. So soon as ever Boscawen was clear of the Soundings, Hawke, it will be remembered, put to sea upon his month's cruise with orders to prevent anything coming out of Brest or the adjacent ports. Hawke, in fact, now that Boscawen was gone, was to move up into his place as it were, and hold the base end of the great lines of communication. We have already seen with how much energy and success he performed his work by paralysing the French preparations in the Basque Roads, and the whole Bay of Biscay. Since the destruction of La Clue's squadron, that of Rochefort was the one on which Louisbourg had mainly to rely. It was intended to take out, besides military stores, 15,000 tons of meal and a battalion of infantry. All this he stopped, but at one point of the long base he had to cover he failed. His concentration upon the most dangerous point had prevented his taking enough precaution to close Brest, and Chef d'Escadre des Gouttes, who was to command on the Louisbourg station, slipped out behind his back in the *Prudent*, 74. He was quickly followed by Beaussier de l'Isle with another 74, three other ships of the line armed *en flûte*, and a frigate carrying a battalion of regular infantry. A little later another squadron of two of the line and four other ships armed *en flûte* also got out under M. du Chaffault, with more stores and another battalion. All these ships got through, and in remarkably quick time. Boscawen had been more than a month out when they started, and was still struggling with baffling winds somewhere between the Canaries and Bermuda, with seven more weeks before him. Yet Beaussier reached

Louisbourg by the end of the month, nearly a fortnight before Boscawen made Halifax. Du Chaffault was a little later, but still in time to land his troops at Port Dauphin, just to the north of Louisbourg, and to go on himself to Quebec in safety.[1] Their success is the more remarkable because all this time Sir Charles Hardy had been endeavouring to blockade Louisbourg with eight of the Halifax squadron besides frigates. He had been there since the beginning of April, but in terrible weather, which probably enabled Des Gouttes and Beaussier to evade him.[2]

It was May 9th when Boscawen at last entered Halifax. A day or two earlier he had picked up at sea two and a half battalions of the Philadelphian contingent. Lawrence, the governor, had three other battalions, including Amherst's, which had already arrived from England, as well as the ordnance store-ships. But neither Whitmore from New York and Boston nor the regiment from Ireland had yet come in. "We shall be disappointed as to numbers," wrote Boscawen to Pitt on his arrival, "though I think we shall have enough to carry out the first part of His Majesty's orders."[3] He is referring to certain additional instructions which he received on the eve of sailing. At the end of January, Pitt, realising that operations would probably be possible some time before Amherst could

[1] Waddington, vol. ii. p. 335. Beaussier actually made the passage in twenty-four days, April 4 to 28, a feat not consoling to British seamanship. Boscawen made Madeira, the Canaries, the Bermudas, and the Isle of Sable. Rodney took seventy-two days, and Hardy two months.

[2] Hardy to Boscawen, April 5. He says the British transports had already begun to arrive, and that he was about to sail for Louisbourg with eight of the line and two frigates; *S.P.* (*America and West Indies*), 79. He reached Halifax on Mar. 19, and was then intending to establish the blockade immediately (*In-letters*, 481, Mar. 22).

[3] *America and West Indies*, 79, May 10.

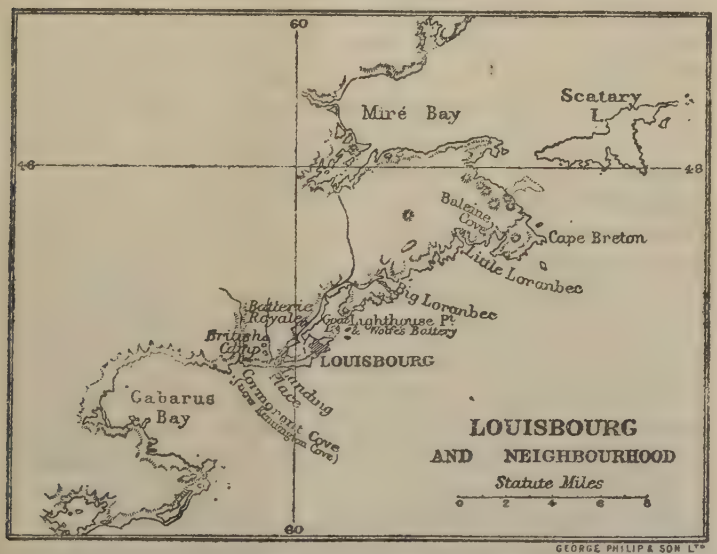
arrive or the whole force be concentrated, had directed, in order to save time, that so soon as 8000 men were assembled, Boscawen and Lawrence were to proceed at once and endeavour to establish a footing at Cape Breton. If it could not be done in Gabarus Bay, where, at Cormorant Cove, the Colonials had landed in the last war, they were to try to the northward in Miré Bay, and so take the Gabarus defences in reverse.[1] A week later in a special letter Boscawen was directed, after Lawrence was landed, not to hesitate to force the harbour if it was practicable.[2] These operations Lawrence, Wolfe, and Boscawen decided to carry out at once. Within the week which was necessary to water and refresh the fleet Whitmore and the Irish regiment arrived, so that nearly the whole force was assembled. Two ships of the line were sent to reinforce Hardy's blockade, and then, after an exasperating spell of adverse wind, they got to sea on May 28th.

The plan on which it was at this time intended to proceed, as Wolfe explains it, was somewhat elaborate and strongly redolent of his theory of combined operations. Every indication indeed points to the plan being his own. The general idea, as always with him, was based on the advantage of their amphibious flexibility. Wolfe, with three battalions of his favourite light infantry, was to land in Miré Bay, about ten miles to the north of Louisbourg, and to march thence towards Gabarus Bay, with the intention presumably of taking in reverse the landing-place at Cormorant Cove, which the French had now strongly entrenched. His movement was to be covered and supported by Monckton, who, with two bat-

[1] "Additional Instructions to Boscawen," and "Instructions to Whitmore," *ibid.*, 76, Jan. 27.

[2] Pitt to Boscawen, Feb. 3.

talions, was to attack either Further (or Little) Loranbec or La Baleine, two coves which lay under Cape Breton, midway between Miré and Louisbourg. As soon as a footing was obtained "a considerable body" was to march down and seize Nether or Big Loranbec, about a mile to the north-east of Louisbourg. By way of diversion for these main movements Boscawen was to threaten the



mouth of the harbour and the defended landing-places just to the westward, while a third force slipped ashore and entrenched itself at the bottom of Gabarus Bay beyond the French works. By these means, it will be seen, it would be impossible for the enemy to tell from what point the real attack was coming. The whole scheme, however, was regarded as open to revision on the spot. "Nothing," wrote Wolfe, as they put to sea, "is yet fixed on, nor will be till we see the object, and perhaps

General Amherst may arrive in the meanwhile time enough to improve the present plan."[1]

Amherst did arrive in time. The *Dublin* was met with outside Halifax, and the new general at once took command. At the same time the last regiment arrived from the Bay of Fundy, and the force was complete—14 battalions of regular infantry, 500 rangers, and a detachment of Royal Artillery, numbering nearly 12,000 men in all. In the fleet, seamen and marines amounted to as many more, while in Louisbourg, thanks to Osborne and Hawke, there were but four regular battalions, besides the normal garrison of twenty-four companies of marine infantry and a few hundred militia. But for the weather with which Hardy had to contend the force would have been still smaller. The port was again open when Boscawen arrived. Hardy's squadron was nowhere to be seen, but Captain Rous, who was commanding one of his frigates, came in to report that on May 30th two more vessels had got into Louisbourg, making the total thirteen, of which five were of the line.[2] In this squadron were some 3000 sailors, but even including them the whole French force did not number much more than a quarter of the British.

With such a disparity of strength the oft-told tale of the operations against Louisbourg is of little tactical significance. The real interest ends when we have traced the strategy that produced that disparity. Still one point of interest remained. No one on either side doubted that the place would fall. The question was whether or not it would fall in time for the British to

[1] Wolfe to Sackville, May 24, *Hist. MSS. Com.*, *IX.* iii. 74–5 (*Stopford-Sackville MSS.*). "Object" was the eighteenth century equivalent for "objective."

[2] Amherst despatch, printed in Mante's *History of the late War in America.*

pursue the ulterior objects of the campaign. Could it be taken by the end of the month, there was every reason to believe Quebec could be taken too. Amherst must have felt this, and, having his whole force in hand, he decided after a careful reconnaissance to waste no time in turning the main defences of Gabarus Bay, as Wolfe had designed, but to deliver a frontal attack upon them supported by feints upon two other points nearer the harbour. Wolfe's plan was at any rate cancelled entirely, and we can well believe that the division of force which it entailed and which was always the essence of Wolfe's conduct of amphibious operations, was rank heresy to a Continental strategist.

It was June 7th before the weather permitted the attempt to be made. The main attack was still committed to Wolfe, though it is clear that, daring and direct as his tactics always were, he by no means approved the somewhat crude plan that had been substituted for his own. "It may be said," so he told his uncle, Major Walter Wolfe, "that we made a rash and ill-advised attempt to land, and by the greatest of good fortune imaginable we succeeded."[1] And again to Sackville, "I couldn't recommend the Bay of Gabarus for a descent, especially as we managed it." The way it was managed was this. As soon as it was light the boats made for the shore under cover of the guns of the cruisers, but nothing would draw the French fire. It was not till Wolfe's flotilla had got within four hundred yards that they unmasked their guns, and the effect was terrific. Wolfe, it would seem, was confirmed in his opinion that an attempt to land exactly where they were expected was not war. It is said he signalled for the whole division to sheer off, but his signal was not obeyed. Two young subalterns, either mistaking it or refusing to see it, were suddenly observed

[1] Wright, *Life of Wolfe*, p. 448.

to be making a dash for a scrap of beach which was masked from the French entrenchments. The place was full of rocks, with an ugly surf, but Wolfe by a sudden decision resolved to push the movement home. With that daring readiness for a risk where risk was inevitable, which with all his science he always retained, he flung his whole division upon the breakers. Boats were smashed to pieces and men drowned right and left, but a footing was gained, and gained on the flank of the entrenchments. In vain a detachment of French grenadiers rushed upon them. The first handful that landed stood their ground, and Wolfe was able to form enough men to fling the Frenchmen back. At the same time Lawrence was bringing up his division in support, and in a few minutes, seeing their retreat threatened, the whole of the defenders broke for the town, leaving Wolfe in possession beyond all reasonable expectation.[1]

The landing once effected, the fate of Louisbourg was finally sealed, and there seemed no reason why its capture should not be carried through in time. But difficulties of all kinds soon declared themselves. The weather held as bad as ever, and the difficulty of landing the siege-train was very great. Amherst was a correct soldier, and after his first rash enterprise would hazard

[1] For details of the Louisbourg operations see Bradley, *Fight with France for North America*, ch. vii.; Waddington, vol. ii. ch. vii.; Wolfe to Sackville, *Hist. MSS. Com.*, *IX.* iii. 74, July 31. (The letter is undated, and assigned by the editor "In or after 1758"; but it was written just after he had heard of Lord Howe's death, the news of which arrived on July 31.) Amherst's despatch is in Mante's *History of the late War*. Hardwicke wrote of it to Newcastle, "I think I have not seen a clearer or cleverer Journal than Amherst's." Copies of Wolfe's orders and his correspondence with Amherst during the siege are in *Add. MSS.* 33,923, ff. 510 *et seq.*, and partly printed in Wright's *Life of Wolfe*. Other general orders and private letters are in Captain John Knox's *Historical Journal of the Campaign in America*. Three letters from Cotton (chaplain in Durell's flagship) to Grenville are in *Grenville Papers*, vol. i. pp. 240. 254, and 273.

nothing. Louisbourg, indeed, since its recent reconstruction by the French, had a reputation which justified very regular proceedings. It was by far the strongest fortress in the New World, and no one was to tell that bad work rendered it a good deal less formidable than its showy defences appeared. Nor was Boscawen any more willing to push things too hard. It was soon evident that there was one operation which alone could reduce the place within the appointed time, and that was that the fleet should force the harbour. Yet in spite of Pitt's hint Boscawen seems never to have entertained the idea. The reason of this caution is not stated, but, as we shall see, it was clearly the presence of Des Gouttes's squadron in the port that deterred him. Wolfe, whose ardent confidence must not always be taken for gospel, clearly thought the admiral's caution exaggerated. "If the whole fleet of France had been in the harbour," he wrote to Sackville "(with a superiority without *bien entendu*), they would all have been destroyed, contrary to the opinion of most people here on sea and land, who had a terrible notion of their broadsides. By augmenting the artillery upon the shore in proportion to their numbers, we could not fail of success. The French had twelve great mortars in readiness to bombard our fleet if they came into the harbour, notwithstanding which the place in its best condition is not tenable against a squadron of men-of-war."

Boscawen, however, thought differently. The main works which commanded the harbour were the Batterie Royale at the back of it fronting the entrance, and another battery on Goat Island in the entrance itself. But the first thing the French did after the landing had been effected was to dismantle the Batterie Royale and abandon it. Wolfe appears to have seen in this withdrawal

the one chance of rapidly reducing the fortress. He believed he saw his way to destroying the ships and the island battery from the land, and so removing the only obstacles to Boscawen's entering the harbour. At all events he was ordered, apparently at his own suggestion, to march his brigade round the harbour and seize the Lighthouse Point on the side opposite the town. The mission was brilliantly carried out. Working his way round the far side of the harbour, he established bomb-batteries as he went, and armed them direct from the fleet. For by this time Sir Charles Hardy had reappeared, and things went merrily. By June 18th, just ten days after the landing, all was ready. There was still time, and Wolfe issued detailed orders for the execution of his project. If any doubt existed as to what was really in his mind, it would be settled by the fact that his first objective was not the island battery which closed the mouth of the harbour, but the ships themselves, "who," he said, "I believe are in a confounded scrape—that is, if our bombardiers are worth a farthing." When the ships were settled with, he told Amherst, he would turn his attention to the battery.[1]

On the night of the 19th the bombardment opened, and though little damage was done, the range was accurately found. The bombardiers were not all Wolfe had hoped, but Des Gouttes was in despair. When the British landed he had gone to Drucourt, the governor, himself a naval officer, and, backed by all his captains, had begged leave to break out before it was too late. Drucourt called a council of war, and by a majority Des Gouttes's request was refused. All, therefore, he could do now was to withdraw his doomed ships as close under

[1] Wolfe to Amherst, June 19, *Add. MSS.* 33,923, f. 510; and Wolfe's Orders, *ibid.*, f. 518.

the walls of the town as possible, and endeavour to protect them from fire with cordage and bales of tobacco on their decks. For the time the device was successful. No impression could be made on the ships, and Wolfe, having succeeded in establishing a battery on Lighthouse Point, turned his chief attention to Goat Island battery. By the 25th it was completely silenced, and nothing but a weak bastion of the town remained to command the entrance to the harbour.

Still Boscawen did not attempt to enter. He displayed, however, great activity in strengthening Wolfe's batteries with great guns from the fleet and relieving his troops with marines. The harmony with which he and Amherst were working together excited every one's admiration. "Mr. Boscawen," wrote Wolfe, "has given all and even more than we could ask of him. He has furnished arms and ammunition, pioneers, sappers, miners, gunners, carpenters, and boats, and is, I must confess, no bad *fantassin* himself, and an excellent back-hand at a siege."

So soon as the island battery had been silenced Wolfe had rejoined Amherst, and began pushing approaches against the seaward bastion of the town itself. Still Boscawen made no move, though the French were expecting hourly to see the fleet attack. He preferred still to direct the bombardment against the ships from the shore, and so hot and menacing did it grow that once more Des Gouttes begged to be allowed to break out. His chance was by no means hopeless. Boscawen's own division lay with the transports in the shelter of Gabarus Bay, while Sir Charles Hardy with his division clung through gale and fog to the mouth of the harbour to prevent the escape. But at this moment he had been blown off, and with luck and judgment Des Gouttes

might well have got away with little injury.[1] Still again the council of war refused. Instead of permitting the fleet its freedom, they finally decided to disarm it, and use its crews to assist the land defence. And in order to prevent the attack which they dreaded, it was agreed to sink four of the five frigates that remained to block the mouth of the harbour. The sixth, the *Echo*, in attempting to get to Quebec, had been captured. So that there now remained in the harbour five ships of the line and a single frigate.

But meanwhile time was slipping away. The bombardiers had failed to reach the ships in their new position, and the siege operations had been proceeding so slowly that it was not till the middle of July, more than five weeks after the landing, that Amherst was in a position to open a real attack. The difficulties with the siege-train which the surf and the marshy ground had caused had been very great, but there were some who thought things might have gone more quickly. "Our next operations," Wolfe told his uncle, "were exceedingly slow and injudicious, owing partly to the difficulty of landing our stores and artillery, and partly to the ignorance and inexperience of our engineers." "On the land side," he told Sackville, "'tis an affair of ten days to people that know the country." Writing on July 15th Beaussier said, "The place is in an evil state; it cannot sustain a siege. If it had been attacked by anybody but the English it would have fallen long ago." This was probably not far from the truth. For at that time, though our artillery was perhaps the best in Europe, our engineers were certainly the worst.[2] The

[1] According to French accounts Hardy was forced away twice, once on June 15, and again on June 29. (Waddington, vol. ii. p. 362, *note*.)

[2] Fortescue, *History of the British Army*, vol. ii. pp. 587–589.

burden of Beaussier's lament was that even then, at the eleventh hour, the fleet was not released. "The squadron," he said, "will stave off the final attack for a few days, but this gain of time is not to be compared with the loss of the squadron, which will fall into the hands of the enemy."[1] But in spite of all he could say the governor would go no further than permit the *Aréthuse*, the last remaining frigate, to try to get to France with despatches—a feat which she successfully accomplished. As for the rest of the ships, Des Gouttes made a formal demand in writing to the governor that he should be told when he might fire them, "since," as he sarcastically observed, "it appeared to him important not to let them fall into the possession of the enemy."

There was indeed no more hope. Amherst, having once got things in order, was pushing the siege with remarkable vigour, and every day large strides were gained. It was the British bombardiers who, after a whole month's effort, were finally able to settle the moment for Des Gouttes. On July 21st a bomb fell on the poop of the *Célèbre*, and in a few minutes she and the two ships next her were in a blaze. The British batteries concentrated a storm of shot and shell on the burning mass, and in the end all three were completely destroyed, and only the *Prudent*, Des Gouttes's flagship, and another, the *Bienfaisant*, were saved. Both of these, however, remained active, causing considerable annoyance by enfilading the advanced works of the British. Boscawen, with his whole heart in the shore operations, had been landing seamen wholesale for the final effort. Now he hardened his heart to finish the business of the troublesome ships by a stroke so daring as to increase our wonder at the extreme caution he had hitherto displayed. His

[1] Waddington, vol. ii. p. 352.

resolve was nothing less than to cut out both the remaining ships of the line from where they lay under the French batteries. On the night of the 25th a flotilla was organised in two divisions under Captains Laforey and Balfour, and manned with six hundred seamen. Under cover of darkness and the fire of every gun and mortar in the British lines, they crept into the harbour and seized both vessels almost without a blow. So soon as their cables were cut the *Bienfaisant* took the ground and had to be fired. But in the light of the flames the boats defiantly towed off the flagship, and anchored her on the opposite side of the harbour, under Wolfe's batteries. It was a brilliant piece of work, and according to the French authorities it was the blow which struck down the spirit of resistance. And no wonder, for the loss of the ships uncovered the harbour front, where the defences were a mere wall open to simple escalade. Boscawen clearly attached equal importance to his success, for immediately it was over he went ashore, and now at last told Amherst he was ready to send six ships of the line into the harbour. But it was not to be. Boscawen found the general already occupied with a flag of truce that had come in from the garrison with proposals for a capitulation. The terms were so hard that for some hours the French were for rejecting them. But Boscawen's threat appears to have turned the scale. To defend the main breach might have been possible a little longer, but with the whole harbour front defenceless it was not to be thought of, when Boscawen threatened to go in, and in the evening the capitulation was signed.[1]

So the key of Canada, as it was then universally considered, passed into English hands. With it went the whole of Cape Breton and Prince Edward's Island

[1] Waddington, vol. ii. p. 359.

(then St. Jean), with vast quantities of guns and stores. The garrison, which still numbered over three thousand, were made prisoners of war, and besides all this there was lost to France nearly the whole of her American squadron and not far short of three thousand seamen.[1] Few naval actions had ever hit her marine so hard, and it was directly due to Drucourt's refusal to allow the fleet to go to sea. Our first impulse is, of course, to condemn his folly as unpardonable. We have come to regard the devotion of a squadron to the defence of a naval fortress as a strategical heresy of the first magnitude, except when that squadron is or is likely to become strong enough to engage the besieging squadron with a fair chance of success. In this case there were no illusions of that kind. The squadron was retained with the full knowledge that it could not save the place, and that it must be lost when Louisbourg fell. All that could be hoped was that the presence of the fleet would delay the end. Still we must not judge Drucourt too hastily. The case is by no means simple. It is clear from Boscawen's conduct that what deterred him from forcing the harbour was not the batteries but the ships. When the last was cleared away he was ready to begin. We may assume therefore that had Des Gouttes been permitted to get the squadron to sea at once Boscawen would have entered the harbour at least as soon as Wolfe had destroyed the island battery, and in French opinion the place must then have been carried by assault perhaps a month sooner than it was. And what would this have meant? Let us see what followed the capitulation. Amherst and Wolfe were both of opinion there was still time to strike

[1] The actual number of naval prisoners was: Fit for duty, 135 officers and 1124 seamen; in hospital, 1347, making together 2606, without counting those that were dead.

successfully at Quebec. Both were anxious to proceed there at once, but Boscawen hesitated. The naval objections were great, and Amherst tenderly reminded Wolfe that after all Boscawen was the best judge of them. The season was already far spent; the transports, in riding out the gales in the bad anchorage that Gabarus Bay afforded, had lost most of their ground tackle; provisions were running short in the fleet; and there were five thousand prisoners to embark before anything could be done. The question, however, was still undecided when, on July 31st, three days after the capitulation, came news which quickly removed any doubts they had. The news was the death of Lord Howe and the disastrous failure of Abercromby's attack.

With an overwhelming force admirably equipped and organised, he had begun his advance up Lake George at the same time that Amherst and Boscawen had appeared before Louisbourg. The first objective was the position which Montcalm had occupied at Ticonderoga, at the foot of Lake Champlain. It was as the British were marching against it from the end of Lake George that the first shot was fired, and it killed Lord Howe at the head of the leading column. There was no one to replace him. Left to himself, Abercromby made an insane frontal attack on a position rendered impregnable with abattis, which might easily have been destroyed by artillery, or turned, if that had proved impracticable. It was exactly the kind of unsoldierlike attack which Wolfe had tried to prevent at Louisbourg. There no harm came of it, but in Abercromby's case the result was an appalling, useless slaughter of the best men in the force, and an ignominious retreat.

This was what they heard at Louisbourg. Once more New York seemed open to a counter-stroke, and Wolfe

could not endure his forced inactivity. On August 8th he sat down and wrote an urgent appeal to Amherst. "If the admiral," he said, "will not carry us to Quebec, reinforcements should certainly be sent to the continent without losing a moment's time. . . . I wish we were allowed to address the admiral, or I wish you yourself, sir, would do it in form." Amherst apparently acted on Wolfe's suggestion, for the same day he and Boscawen held a formal meeting, and signed a joint declaration as to what was the right course to take. The document was simply an embodiment of the views of Amherst and Wolfe. The best thing, it said, would be to go on to Quebec, but that scheme was not practicable. For in view of the failure at Ticonderoga and Abercromby's retreat, they regarded it as a vital necessity to send six battalions to Boston, to try to join him through the woods. The most they could do was to send three battalions to the St. Lawrence, and two to the Bay of Fundy. This they held, under the circumstances, was better than proceeding in accordance with these instructions against Mobile or the Mississippi.[1]

With these operations the campaign came to an end. Instead of knocking at the gates of Quebec, the force was employing the last of the summer in laying waste the French coast settlements, and in going to the relief of a general who proved to be in no danger. The fate of Canada was thus postponed yet another year, and it would be hard to say that it was not the retention of Des Gouttes's squadron in Louisbourg that saved it. This, at least, appears to have been a current opinion in the service at the time. "If the ships," wrote Mante, "had left the harbour as the commodore desired on June 14th,

[1] Declaration by Boscawen and Amherst, Aug. 8, *S.P.* (*America and West Indies*), 79.

the English admiral would have entered immediately after, and the place might have been lost before the expiration of the month; and this would have put it in the power of the English general to employ the months of July and August in sending succours to the troops marching against Canada, and to enter the river St. Lawrence at the proper season."[1] Quebec could then have been struck behind Montcalm's back, while he was away opposing Abercromby, and while the city was as yet unready for serious defence.

Was the gain worth the loss of the squadron? Who shall say? But considering that the whole game of the French lay in creating in Europe a position that was impossible for us before we could secure our object in the West, the gain of a whole year was worth a high price. There were many who, with full knowledge, expected peace in the winter that was coming. Had those expectations been fulfilled, the loss of a squadron would have been a price France would have paid lightly for being able to treat with Quebec still in her hands. The whole situation is one so full of conjecture and hypothesis that it is impossible to say categorically whether Drucourt or Des Gouttes was right, or whether Boscawen would not have been justified in taking a higher tactical risk. Still it remains of high instructive value, if only to remind us that neither strategy nor tactics can ever be a matter of fine-cut precept, that even our most sacred and apparently obvious rules are made sometimes to be broken, if the dominating political conditions require it. No rule in strategy could appear more rigid than that a squadron must not be tied to the

[1] *History of the late War*, p. 138. Mante wrote in 1772, and must have been familiar with English service opinion on the subject, having served as assistant-engineer at Havana in 1762.

defence of a maritime fortress, or that a squadron, on which the communication of a combined force depends, should not be flung against a fortified port. But at Louisbourg occurred a situation against which these rules seem to bend in our hands, and to give no absolute certainty for our guidance.

Another naval loss which the French suffered in the campaign was scarcely less serious than the destruction of Des Gouttes's squadron. Though Abercromby had not felt himself strong enough to renew the attack on Montcalm at Ticonderoga, he was in no danger of being attacked himself, and was easily persuaded by Bradstreet, the great partisan leader, to let him strike out to the left and attempt the destruction of Frontenac, at the foot of Lake Ontario. The operation, at Bradstreet's suggestion, had formed an integral part of Loudoun's plan of campaign, which had been superseded by Pitt's. Frontenac was a point of strategical importance only second to Louisbourg itself. For here was the depôt for the supply not only of all Upper Canada, but of the Ohio forts as well. Here, too, was the naval headquarters from which the French had commanded the great inland waters ever since they had destroyed the rival British station at Oswego. It was at Oswego that Bradstreet, with two or three thousand men, struck the Lakes, and here amidst the ruins of the demolished fort he launched his bateaux and whaleboats on Lake Ontario. The whole movement had been conducted with the most brilliant rapidity. Frontenac was surprised with a slender garrison, while the relieving force was still far away, and it capitulated at once. In the fort lay a stock of furs and stores of enormous value, and in the harbour almost the whole of the inland naval force—nine vessels mounting a hundred guns. All these were carried off or destroyed, and the

fort itself razed to the ground. The effect of the blow was to restore to the British the command of the Lakes, and practically sever Montreal and Quebec from Upper Canada and the Ohio Valley: and what was of even more importance, to incline the Indians from their belief that the French was the winning side. The work was completed a few weeks later by the fall of Fort Duquesne, which the operations of Forbes compelled the French to evacuate in the autumn. On its site Forbes was able, before his untimely death, to raise a new fort, which he named Pittsburg, in honour of what Lady Anson used to call "our *primum mobile*."

There still remained the squadron of Du Chaffault in Quebec. Boscawen had received orders from home to leave Durell on the station with ten of the line to winter at Halifax. This squadron presumably he considered equal to dealing with Du Chaffault. At all events, after making all arrangements he proceeded home. Durell, however, failed to intercept Du Chaffault, and the consequence was he and Boscawen fell in with one another in the Soundings on October 27th. Du Chaffault had five of the line, a frigate, and one British Indiaman prize which he had just picked up. Boscawen's squadron had been broken up in a gale, and he had with him only three of the line, as many frigates, and his prize the *Bienfaisant*. A brush took place, but so heavy was the weather that no harm was done, and the French held away for Brest. Boscawen, in spite of his inferiority, toiled after him, but without gaining, though the Indiaman was recaptured. The news of the brush caused great excitement at home, especially as the West Indian convoy was just coming in. Still Saunders, who had relieved Anson in command of the Channel fleet, was out. "Saunders may have a chance of them," wrote Lady Anson, "if they should

escape Bos. . . . He will hang himself in some of his own rigging, I do believe, if he misses everything." Then came a report that the West Indian convoy had been caught and its frigate escort captured, and then that the French had been seen off Lundy. "The Channel," wrote Lady Anson on November 2nd, "has been in the greatest bustle for some days past that I ever remember to have heard of." It was soon known, however, that most of the convoy had got safe into Cork. Only one had been caught and sunk, and the escort was recaptured. The French reported in the Bristol Channel proved to be one of Du Chaffault's ships of the line disabled, and she was promptly captured by Captain Thomas Saumarez.[1] Still both Boscawen and Saunders failed to catch Du Chaffault, and with the bulk of his squadron he was clever enough to get safely in.[2]

So the campaign came to an end. It cannot be denied that the French had made a splendid resistance to the numbers and resources that had been opposed to them, but none the less it was clear that the dream of Galissonière and Duquesne was passing away, and that Canada, hemmed in both from the east and the west, was being served herself as she would have served the British Colonies.

[1] The *Belliqueux*, 64. Saumarez's ship was the *Antelope*, 50. See Ross, *Memoirs of Lord de Saumarez*, i. p. 11.

[2] Beatson, vol. ii. pp. 136, 194; Lady Anson to Lord Royston, Oct. 31 and Nov. 2, *Hardwicke Papers*, 35,376.

CHAPTER XIV

COMMERCE PROTECTION—EAST INDIES

In discussing the main strategy of Pitt, attention has been already called to the important distinction between wars with a limited object and wars whose object was unlimited. In the one case we saw the object was merely to gain some particular advantage from the enemy; in the other it is a life and death struggle in which each side tries to crush the other into impotence. The distinction is one of real value in strategical design, but it is by no means constant. For there is inherent in it a tendency for limited wars to become unlimited—that is to say, if the limited object is of sufficient importance to our enemy we shall have to crush his armed force entirely before he will submit to the loss we seek to inflict upon him. And, conversely, when our enemy perceives that we are getting the upper hand irretrievably within the area of the limited object, his only remedy will be to crush our power at its source, or, in other words, engage us in a war which is unlimited in character. This was the change that came over the war after the campaign of 1758.

Hitherto, as we have seen, the strategy of both sides had been designed on the lines of a limited war. Our own central motive had been to establish our domination in North America. As yet there had been no generally realised purpose even of driving the French from Canada, still less of a general attack upon their empire. It is

true that a small expedition had been sent against the French possessions on the West Coast of Africa. The project of Mr. Cumming, the Fighting Quaker, after disappointments lasting over nearly two years, had been taken up by Pitt, but it was not in the strength Cumming considered necessary. The troops he asked for were refused. Except for some artillery, the armament with which he was furnished was purely naval, with only two hundred marines for a landing force. The squadron was no more than two small ships of the line and half-a-dozen smaller vessels. Captain Marsh commanded, and Cumming himself went out as political agent. By pure luck and impudent daring they succeeded in capturing Senegal from a French force nearly as large as their own, but at Goree they were driven off with loss too serious for a renewal of the attempt. Although the conquest of Senegal was of considerable commercial importance, the whole affair was on too small a scale to be regarded as part of the great offensive movement. Placing it at its highest, it was really nothing more than an eccentric attack intended to operate one of those diversions which Frederick the Great had indicated when he first suggested a plan of war to the British court. A truer diagnosis would class it as mere commerce destruction.

India, again, if the war is to be rightly understood, must be relegated to the same place. There a considerable war had been going on ever since the spring of 1757. But as yet there were no dreams of empire, nor was it regarded as a theatre of war at all comparable in importance to the struggle in North America, or even to that in the West Indies. In Paris and London it was treated as what it really was, the armed rivalry of two great chartered companies—worthy indeed of support

from home, but only in discharge of the ordinary duty of government to protect commerce in time of war. Owing to the great things which have sprung from these operations, there has always been a tendency to exaggerate their importance as part of the Seven Years' War. As a chapter in the history of the British Empire in India it is scarcely possible to overestimate their place, but in any reasoned analysis of Pitt's great war, in any just appreciation of the strategy that governed it, they can but appear as a mere question of commerce protection, and in no sense as true offensive operations directed at territorial conquest.

In this light—however they may appear to us now—they were regarded by both the belligerents at the time. For France it was an attack on our East Indian commerce, which differed only in form from their ordinary *guerre de course*, and the forces employed were almost entirely those of the French East India Company. For us it was a question of defending that commerce. The initiative was with the French Government. At the end of 1756, when their success at Port Mahon was inclining them to a general offensive, a whole regiment of regular infantry had been sent out, and it was to be followed as soon as possible by a squadron of the King's ships under Commodore D'Aché, with another regiment and the new commissary-general whom the Government and the Company had chosen, General de Lally Tollendal. His instructions determine exactly the strategical coefficient of his mission. They amount to a definite reversal of the policy of territorial expansion which his discredited predecessor Dupleix had inaugurated. So far from being instructed to make conquests, he was ordered, if possible, to withdraw from those already made, and from all political engagements with native princes. No offen-

sive operations of any kind ashore were to be undertaken except against the British coast factories. "He must forget for the time," so the order ran, "that the English hold any place in the interior. His whole object should be to seize places on the coast." The nature of the enterprise is further emphasised by the character of the force employed. Originally it was intended to include four ships of the line, and with this force D'Aché made an attempt to sail the first week in March 1757, but casualties due to bad seamanship compelled him to return. Before he could sail again the French Government had become aware of the formidable nature of the preparations which Pitt was making against Louisbourg under Lord Loudoun and Holburne. India was immediately relegated to a still lower place, and three of D'Aché's ships of the line were taken from him for the concentration that was to parry Pitt's main attack. Finally therefore when, on the same day that De la Motte had evaded our blockade of Brest, D'Aché got out of L'Orient, he had but one ship of the line, and the rest of his force was composed of five Indiamen of about fifty guns each.[1]

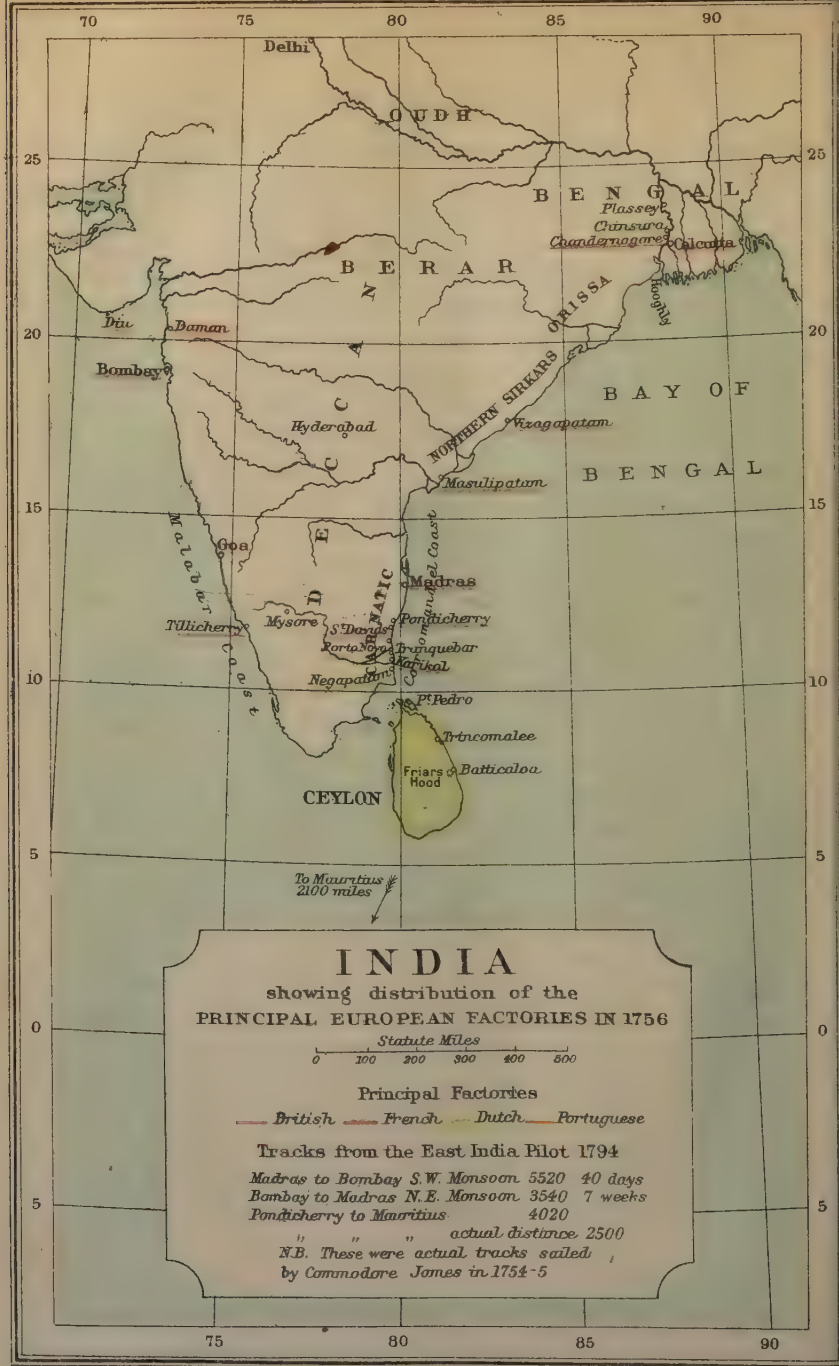
Turning to the British side, we see the same correct tendency to subordinate India to the main operations. When the storm was brewing we had out in the East Indies one battalion of regular infantry and a small commerce protection squadron under Admiral Watson, which was more than equal to dealing with the force which the French company usually had on the station. It consisted of four lesser ships of the line and three frigates, and was engaged in keeping an eye on the French and in general police duties. In February 1756,

[1] Waddington, vol. iii. pp. 380–81; Lacour-Gayet, *Marine Militaire sous Louis XV.*, ch. xxii.

while the Duc de Richelieu was preparing his descent on Minorca, Watson and Clive were operating from Bombay against the stronghold of the pirate Angria. So soon as the British Admiralty knew of the force assigned to D'Aché, they replied in the usual way by ordering four of the line to take out the trade to India. They were placed under Commodore Steevens, who had Kempenfelt for his flag-captain. No attempt, it will be seen, was made to bring Watson up to a distinct superiority over the French, such as would be required for a general offensive in the Indian theatre. Pitt and the Admiralty were content with placing him in an equality such as would suffice for preventing the French from securing command of those seas, and would enable the British East India Company to hold its own. On March 13th, a week after D'Aché's abortive attempt to sail, Steevens got clear away, keeping company with the Mediterranean and East Indian convoys so far as their lines of passage were identical.[1]

Thus, as things turned out, we were well ahead of the French in time, but not superior to them in force. For the French East Indiamen were really powerful ships of war—much superior to our own, which were only armed merchantmen—and, according to the tactical ideas of the time, since D'Aché had five of them instead of his three of the line, he lost little by the exchange. In the matter of naval position the French had the advantage. Their rendezvous was the base port of Mauritius, lying practically on the line of passage, but well out of the theatre of operations. Thither the French ships on the Indian station always retired about the end of October to refit and take shelter during the stormy period of

[1] *Admiralty Secretary, Out-letters*, 78 (*Orders and Instructions*), p. 147, March 1, 1757; *In-letters*, 162 (Steevens's despatches).



INDIA

showing distribution of the

PRINCIPAL EUROPEAN FACTORIES IN 1756

Statute Miles

0 100 200 300 400 500

Principal Factories

British — French ··· Dutch — Portuguese

Tracks from the East India Pilot 1794

Madras to Bombay S.W. Monsoon 5520 40 days
Bombay to Madras N.E. Monsoon 3540 7 weeks
Pondicherry to Mauritius 4020
" " " actual distance 2500
N.B. These were actual tracks sailed by Commodore Jones in 1754-5

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the monsoons, and there a fresh squadron coming out from France could join hands with whatever force was on the station before the danger zone was entered. The corresponding port for the English was Bombay, also well out of the theatre of the contest, but far beyond it. Thither Steevens proceeded in full expectation of finding his admiral in the ordinary course. This year, however, the British arrangements had been dislocated. When Watson in the summer of 1756 was cruising, according to custom, on the Madras station, or the Coromandel coast as it was then termed, he had received the terrible news of the capture of Calcutta by Surajah Dowlah, and the tragedy of the Black Hole. News that war had broken out with France was expected at any time, and for a while there was considerable hesitation in the Company's headquarters at Madras as to what they wished Watson to do. He had pointed out to the council that although he was ready to send some cruisers with a military force to the Hooghly, he could not divide his battle squadron. He must keep it in one body and to one object. It could be used either in defending their interests on the Coromandel coast and their capital at Madras, or it could go north to make certain of recovering Calcutta. It was for them to inform him to which object they attached the higher importance. The decision of the Company was as fine an example of courageous strategy as Watson's attitude was sagacious and correct. With the dilemma placed lucidly before them, they quickly made up their minds. Madras must take its chance, and Watson with practically his whole force set out to carry Clive to Calcutta.[1]

The expedition was a brilliant success. On New

[1] *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters*, 161 (*East Indies*), Aug. 20, 25, 27, and 30, 1756.

Year's Day 1757 Calcutta was in their hands, but the business was far from ending there. The recapture of Calcutta was quickly followed by the news that England had declared war upon France, and of the reinforcements that were coming out. Some fifty miles above Calcutta lay Chandernagore, the headquarters of the French company on the Bengal side, and the focus of all their operations against British influence in that region. Seeing what Watson's force was, Chandernagore at the moment was a certain prey. Yet, now that his special object was secured, ought he not to return and carry the Madras troops back? With Clive at his elbow, the hesitation was not long. For awhile the French agent, seeing the hopelessness of the situation, tried to save it by offering to sign a treaty of neutrality during the war. Watson finally rejected the idea on the ground that the French local agent had no authority to bind his chiefs at Pondicherry, and the first week in March he and Clive made up their minds to attack. Watson with his flagship and two other vessels proceeded at once to force his way up to the town through every obstacle which the French had prepared in the river. Supported by the fire of the ships, Clive's force was irresistible, and in ten days' time Chandernagore was theirs. So far all was well. But Watson soon found that the exploit had involved his fleet still more deeply in Clive's ambitious projects, and still further away from his duty of commerce protection. The attack on Chandernagore brought down upon the English company a new storm from Surajah Dowlah, who had made his peace since the recapture of Calcutta. War broke out again in form, and Watson, instead of sailing for Madras, remained to support Clive in these marvellous operations which ended in the epic victory of Plassey.

Between them Watson and Clive had fairly launched the Company on a career of conquest that was entirely outside Pitt's plan of war. So foreign indeed was it to the real struggle in which France and England were engaged, that even that dazzling achievement which laid Bengal at the Company's feet failed to change the broad character of the war. Only in Clive's own breast was awakening the ambition of empire. For Pitt his exploit was chiefly significant as a salutary example to the unfortunate commanders to whose hands the main operations of the war had been unhappily entrusted. The news came home when he was smarting under the failures of Rochefort and Louisbourg. In the House of Commons he pronounced a panegyric on Clive as a "Heaven-born general," but the speech sounded less like a note of triumph than a castigation of the men who had failed. It altered his system not one jot. When Clive heard how handsomely Pitt had spoken of him, he sent home his secretary with a letter in which he poured out his heart to the great Commoner, and begged for Imperial assistance to enable the Company to take upon themselves the sovereignty of the whole of Surajah Dowlah's province. He urged how vastly superior were the advantages of Indian conquest over any other sphere of Colonial expansion. The wealth would be enormous, and two thousand European troops enough to secure it. "It is well worth consideration," he said, "that this project may be brought about without draining the Mother Country, as has been too much the case with our possessions in America." But Pitt was unmoved. Not all Clive's enthusiasm, nor all the brilliant future he painted, could make him swerve from his system of concentration upon America.[1]

[1] *Chatham Corr.*, i. 387–392.

Mere sense of proportion, therefore, forbids us to do more than glance at the operations by which we repelled the French attack upon our commerce and factories in the East. Bussy, the able lieutenant whom Dupleix had left behind in the Carnatic, replied to the loss of Chandernagore by seizing Masulipatam, the British Company's port to the north of Madras; and thus he completed the French domination of the vast district which lay between Bengal and Madras, and was known as the Northern Sirkars. It was done the day after Plassey. Watson was still engaged in assisting Clive to settle Bengal, and before he could move he died of fever. Rear-Admiral George Pocock, his second-in-command, succeeded him, and the first news he had was that Captain James, who had been left with two cruisers to watch Pondicherry, had been chased off by a superior squadron. It was the advanced guard of D'Aché's force with the regiment of infantry that had left France in December.

The dilemma with which the new commander-in-chief found himself confronted was almost as critical as that which his dead chief had solved with so much success. The newly-arrived French ships having landed the troops, returned to Mauritius to await the coming of D'Aché. Similarly, according to the regular routine, Pocock should have been on his way to Bombay to meet Steevens; but until the new defences of Calcutta were more forward it was quite unable to take care of itself, and the news of the activity of the French squadron persuaded Pocock that D'Aché must have arrived, and that any day he might appear in the Hooghly. It was to the defence of Calcutta that the Company's authorities had decided to devote the fleet, and his plain duty, therefore, seemed to be to remain where he was. Thus it befell that when in the autumn of 1757 Steevens reached Bombay with

the reinforcements from England he found no one there. The position was far from pleasant, for to all appearance it was in D'Aché's power to interpose his united force between the two British divisions. Fortunately D'Aché was far behind. His detention at L'Orient had caused him to miss the season, and he arrived at Mauritius too late to act. The consequence was that Pocock, having waited till all was secure in Bengal, sailed for Madras in January 1758, and was able to join hands with Steevens a good month before D'Aché appeared upon the scene.

The campaign which followed has become almost proverbial as the typical instance of an ineffectual tactical system failing to achieve decisive results. It might be doubted, however, whether the failure should be wholly laid at the door of tactics. An indecisive campaign was all that the strategical balance indicated. On the English side, at least, the force allotted by the war plan to the Indian station does not indicate any hope or even intention of securing the command of the sea. The force placed at Pocock's disposal was too nearly on an equality with that of D'Aché to admit of anything but an attitude of general defence. The intention indicated was to keep the command in dispute, to prevent the French obtaining it rather than to obtain it ourselves. To make the position more impossible, Chandernagore had cost Pocock the *Kent*, his only seventy-four. She was an old ship, and had suffered so severely in Watson's strenuous attack that it was found impossible to repair her, and she had to be abandoned in the Hooghly. This left him with seven small ships of the line (including two "fifties") and two or three frigates, against nine which D'Aché was known to have fit to lie in the line. Nevertheless Pocock had confidence in the superiority of his own units,

and did not hesitate to take the initiative by seizing the common line of passage.

Our naval position on the Coromandel coast was far from good. Madras lay to the northward and leeward of both Pondicherry and Carical, the chief French ports. To secure the position which Pocock required on the common line of passage it was therefore necessary to make a heavy beat to the southward, and this he proceeded to do the moment the united fleet was ready for sea. It was in any case necessary to get to windward of Cuddalore, where, just below Pondicherry, the British Company had a factory called Fort St. David, for this was believed to be the first French objective. So well did Pocock handle his squadron that in ten days he succeeded in making the head of Ceylon. Unfortunately his fine effort was useless, for he was just too late. As he beat to the southward, D'Aché passed up unseen, and on April 28th he anchored before Fort St. David. There he surprised two British frigates, and compelled them to run themselves ashore, thus further reducing Pocock's force. Next morning D'Aché sent northward a seventy-four and a frigate to take Lally into Pondicherry, and no sooner had he done so than Pocock appeared to the southward and windward.

Thus after all, when contact was made, the two forces were equal. D'Aché, it is true, had eight ships fit to lie in the line, but only his flagship was a King's ship. The rest, as we have seen, were Indiamen, and the whole barely equal to Pocock's seven. D'Aché was at anchor, and Pocock, with intent to reap the advantage of surprise, immediately made the usual British signal for attack in general chase. D'Aché very properly weighed, stood out to sea, and signalled to recall the two detached ships. Still Pocock held on in the disorder of general chase till

he was within a league of the enemy. By that time D'Aché had formed his line of battle, and was lying-to waiting for him. Under these circumstances, seeing that he was in numerical inferiority, Pocock had practically no choice either by the "Fighting Instructions" or the tactical science of the time, but to form line himself and attack van to van.[1] The usual action ensued. Not a ship was taken on either side. It was just a sharp artillery duel in which the French fired langrage at the British rigging, and the British round shot at the French hulls. When it grew too hot for the French, and D'Aché found he could not get his captains to stand up to it, he let go and ran to leeward. Pocock at once hauled down the signal for the line, and re-hoisted "General chase." But it was useless. He was too much damaged in his rigging to overhaul his enemy, who ran for Pondicherry. To attack them there with his crippled squadron was impossible, and the round came to an end by Pocock running for Madras to refit.

It was on April 29th that the action was fought. In a week Pocock was out again, for Lally had already laid siege to Fort St. David, and Pocock's mission was to

[1] Art. xix. (xviii. of Russell): "If the admiral and his fleet have the wind of the enemy and they have stretched themselves in a line of battle, the van of the admiral's fleet is to steer with the van of the enemy's and there to engage them." It is universally said that it was the "Fighting Instructions" that forced an admiral of that day to fight ship to ship from van to rear. It was really not so except under Article xviii., when the two fleets were approaching each other on opposite tacks. When the enemy, as in the present case, was merely "stretched in a line" to receive our attack, there was nothing in the article to prevent a concentration on his van (which in such a case would also be his weathermost part) by oblique attack. This form of attack was one of the last words of the experience gained in the Dutch Wars (see *Fighting Instructions* (*Navy Rec. Soc.*), pp. 143–4), and Article xix. may well have been devised to permit its use. In any case, if there was anything to force a British admiral to adopt the parallel form of attack in all cases, it was due to the custom of the service and not the "Fighting Instructions."

save it. But another hard beat was necessary before he could get back so far to the southward, and it was the end of May before he had sight even of Pondicherry. D'Aché was still there, but Lally was away at Fort St. David; and in his absence, the governor and council of Pondicherry, regardless of his plan of offence and thinking only of their own security, decided to keep the fleet under their batteries. No sooner was the resolution taken than Lally appeared, in a frenzy of rage. D'Aché was immediately ordered to sea, and had to go. But that was all; he would not fight. He kept well to the windward, and Pocock struggled vainly to get at him. Lally had to hurry off again to his siege, and so soon as his back was turned the council recalled the squadron. At the same time Pocock received word from Madras that Fort St. David had fallen, and he also returned to water, before Madras could be invested in its turn.

But Madras was to have a long respite. Lally was busy elsewhere trying to get funds to carry on the war, and Pocock had leisure thoroughly to repair the damages he had suffered in the action. By July 27th he was out again, and off Pondicherry. D'Aché put to sea next morning, but again he kept the wind, and for days Pocock strove in vain to bring him to action. It was not till August 3rd that a lucky shift of wind put D'Aché under his lee and gave him his chance. He at once bore down to engage, but it was only the old story. So soon as the English fire began to tell, D'Aché bore away "in an irregular line abreast." Pocock tried to punish him by signalling for closer action, "in order," he says, "for all our line to bear down to rake them, which was obeyed." D'Aché replied by making more sail to get away, and Pocock fell back once more on

"general chase." Whereupon the French cut their boats adrift and fairly ran for Pondicherry, and so, as they had the superior speed, the action ended.[1]

Again no decision had been reached; but the evils of the French defensive tactics were beginning to declare themselves. In each action they had lost in men far more heavily than the English. It was the inevitable result of their method, and of all losses men were the most difficult to replace. D'Aché began to see that Pocock's hard hitting was wearing him down. After the action, though the French had run for Pondicherry, Pocock had not gone back to Madras. The season during which further action was possible was fast slipping away, and in spite of the injuries to his rigging, Pocock determined to keep to windward of his enemy and try to force another engagement. So instead of going north to Madras he boldly seized the French anchorage at Carical, and there set to work to repair his injuries. D'Aché, in Pondicherry Roads, saw himself threatened with an attack where he lay with his crews and hulls cut to pieces, and feeling in no case to repel it, he drew his squadron close in under the batteries. The truth is he had had enough, and to the consternation of the Pondicherry council and the fury of Lally, he announced his intention of retiring to Mauritius so soon as he could get his ships fit for sea. In vain every one protested. The most D'Aché would do was to leave his marines behind him. On September 3rd he sailed. Pocock, who had gone to Trincomalee to water, and was watching there for his prey, dashed out to intercept him; but although he sighted him, he once more failed to bring him to action. Thereupon Pocock, having seen all clear on the station, decided in his turn to carry on

[1] Pocock's despatch, Aug. 23, 1758, *In-letters*, 161.

to Bombay in order to refit during the north-west monsoon.[1]

Thus the campaign had fully served its purpose in the general plan of the war. Our East Indian trade had been well defended against the French attack, and our East India Company had been enabled to hold its own and even more. For what they had gained in Bengal was of far greater value than what they had lost in Madras. Watson and Pocock had brought this about by acting consistently on two sound principles—the one was to concentrate on one thing at a time, whereby they recovered Calcutta, took Chandernagore, and enabled Clive to win Plassey; the other was to devote the battle fleet persistently to trying to force a decision upon the enemy. In getting that decision Pocock failed, but by pressing for it he prevented the French from making any attempt to recover the ground which Watson and Clive had torn from them in Bengal, or from interfering with the flow of trade with home. This was his real function in the general design. It is then sounder criticism to dwell upon the success with which he performed it, than to disparage him, as the custom is, because he knew no other way of bringing an unwilling enemy to a decisive action than by attacking in general chase.

[1] For the campaign see Beatson, vol. ii. pp. 90 *et seq.* His accounts of the actions are taken almost word for word from the despatches of the two admirals. Pocock's are in *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters*, 161; and D'Aché's are printed in *La Vie Privée de Louis XV.*, vol. iv. pp. 322–327.

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CHAPTER XV

COMMERCE PROTECTION—WEST INDIES

That the true view of the relation of the Indian theatre of the war to the whole is that it was a mere question of commerce protection becomes clearer still when we turn to the other minor theatre—the West Indies. Here during the first years of the struggle it was a case of commerce protection pure and simple, modified solely by the reciprocal duty of destroying and hindering the enemy's commerce, and the occupation of such lines of military communication as lay through the adjacent seas.

At the outbreak of the war the distribution of the islands was as follows: Spain claimed the Bahamas, but her occupation was not effective, and the British, in spite of two expulsions, persisted in maintaining their old Buccaneer settlement at New Providence. The chief Spanish possessions were Cuba and Puerto Rico, in the Greater Antilles. Of the rest of the group, France held the western half of San Domingo, and Spain the less important eastern, while England had Jamaica. In the Lesser Antilles England held nothing but some of the Virgins and the comparatively unimportant group of the Leeward Islands about Antigua, including St. Christopher's or St. Kitts, Nevis, and Montserrat, with the unsettled island of Barbuda. With the exception of Barbadoes, which was British, France had all the rest as far as Grenada. For although the French chain was broken by the islands of Dominica, St. Lucia, and St.

Vincent, which the last treaty of peace had declared neutral and unallotted, they were being gradually absorbed by French settlements, and were entirely dominated by the government of Martinique.[1] In the extreme south lay Tobago, which was also neutral, and Trinidad, which was Spanish; while the Dutch had Curaçoa, off the coast of Venezuela, St. Eustatius and St. Martin, just north of St. Kitts, and a few of the Virgins.

Owing to the awkward distribution of the British islands, and to the prevailing easterly winds, the Admiralty had found it necessary during the late war to divide the West Indian command, and ever since 1745 it had formed two stations, styled officially the Jamaica and the Leeward Islands stations.[2] The area of the Jamaica station comprised the Greater Antilles and the Bahamas as far north as the extremity of the Strait of Florida, and its headquarters were at Port Royal, in the mouth of Kingston Harbour. The Leeward Islands station comprised the whole area of the Lesser Antilles, or what English mariners called the Leeward and Windward Islands, stretching from the Virgins and the Antigua group to the isolated island of Barbadoes. Its chief base was at English Harbour in Antigua, with a minor yard near by at Basse Terre in St. Kitts.[3] Barbadoes

[1] Admiral Moore to Pitt, Oct. 1759, *S.P. Colonial* (*America and West Indies*), 100. They had a considerable settlement in Dominica, were collecting the King's duties in St. Vincent in Nov. 1755, and had lately occupied St. Lucia.—Commodore Frankland to Cleveland, Nov. 14, 1755, *In-letters*, 306.

[2] The Leeward Islands station was inaugurated by a squadron which was detached from the Mediterranean under Vice-Admiral Isaac Townshend to deal with the squadron which the French had sent out under M. de Caylus.—Beatson, vol, i. p. 285.

[3] The nomenclature is confusing. According to the original Spanish system the Greater Antilles (*i.e.* our Jamaica station) were the Leeward Islands and the rest the Windward. Our name "Leeward Island station" seems to have been due to the fact that the Antigua group which formed

being the furthest to windward and by far the richest and most populous island, would have been the natural base, but there unfortunately we had nothing but the open anchorage of Carlisle Bay. The British strategical position was thus very bad, for our principal island, Jamaica, was to leeward of all the rest, while Barbadoes, our most windward island, had no harbour fit for a naval station. To make matters worse, the French were extremely well placed. They also had two bases, one at Cap François on the north coast of San Domingo, which was directly to windward of Jamaica and dominated the Windward Passage into the Caribbean Sea, and the other at Fort de France (or Fort Royal, as it was then called) in Martinique, which was the weathermost island of their Windward group.

The superiority of the French position was strongly emphasised by the course of trade. The ordinary route from England for the whole of the West Indian trade was by way of Madeira, but after leaving that rendezvous the convoys separated in mid-ocean, the Barbadoes trade going direct to Carlisle Bay, and that for the Leeward Islands and Jamaica to Antigua. From this point the Leeward Islands trade was distributed to Nevis, St. Kitts, and Montserrat, while the Jamaica portion went forward along the south coast of San Domingo to its various ports of destination. In war time, therefore, the whole of this trade from home was particularly exposed to danger as it entered what may be called the landfall waters, that is, the waters immediately to windward of Antigua and of Barbadoes respectively. Of

the bulk of our holding was entirely within the Leeward Islands according to our system, that is, they were the Leeward section of the Lesser Antilles. The Virgins were formally included in the Leeward station in 1757.—Frankland to Cleveland, *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters*, 306, April 28; and *cf.* Moore to same, May 7, 1758, *ibid.*, 307.

these two areas, that off Barbadoes was comparatively easy to protect. The channel of its trade was only the breadth of the island, that is, about twenty-five miles, and it could easily be covered by a single cruiser. For this reason it was not a popular station for the French privateers, especially as it could only be reached by a long beat to windward. The Antigua area was unfortunately in quite another case. Ships from home might and did make their landfall anywhere between Guadeloupe and St. Martin, that is, from latitude 16° to between 18° and 19°. It was the practice to make these latitudes from a hundred to a hundred and fifty leagues to the eastward, and then run down to make the land. The danger zone then was an area of about one hundred and fifty miles from north to south by about four hundred miles from east to west, lying conveniently to windward of the chief French ports. Here their smartest privateers swarmed. For the extent and richness of the trade that entered it, and the difficulty of patrolling it adequately, made it the happy hunting-ground of the French commerce destroyers.[1]

Besides these dangers in the landfall waters there were the minor perils attending the process of distribution after the convoys arrived at the general rendezvous. While this was going on the Leeward Islands trade was still exposed to the privateers of Guadeloupe, while for that of Jamaica there was a specially critical point off Cape Tiburon at the western end of St. Domingo, where it could be struck by cruisers from Cap François and Port-au-Prince. On the other hand, since the French West India Islands all lay to windward of the British bases in each area, the French trade from home had no such gauntlets to run. As for the homeward-bound movement, that was almost

[1] Captain Middleton to Pringle, *Barham Papers*.

equally to England's disadvantage. The Barbadoes trade had first to make its way up to Antigua, past Martinique and Guadeloupe. There it met the whole Leeward Islands trade, and together they could proceed home by the usual northern route. Worst of all, however, was the Jamaica route homeward, for that lay up the Windward Passage into the jaws of the French main base, and thence through the Bahamas by the Crooked Island Passage.

Besides the home trade, there had also to be protected the trade with our North American Colonies, which at that time was very valuable.[1] This trade was in the worst case of all, at least for the more important part of it which went to Jamaica; for both outward and homeward its ordinary route was through the Windward Passage. Over and above this there was the local and coasting trade amongst the islands, which was the special prey of the local privateers. The days of the buccaneers were still green, and the islands of Martinique and Guadeloupe bred the old race like flies. The peculiar indented coasts of these two islands were as perfectly adapted to their predatory operations as was the coast of Norway in Viking days. Every obscure fjord or *cul de sac* of the windward coasts had its settlement and its little fort, which our small cruisers could not attack and our larger ones could not reach. From these fastnesses they could play havoc with our Barbadoes and Windward Islands trade, while the larger vessels swarmed to windward of Antigua and Barbadoes on the look-out for stragglers from the convoys.

The problem of commerce protection in the West Indies was thus one of great intricacy. The adoption

[1] Even in 1759, in the height of the war, it amounted to nearly two and a half millions. Imports from North America in that year were £648,683; exports were £1,832,948.—*Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. xxxii. p. 533.

of the convoy system, which was then the invariable rule, simplified it to a certain extent, but there remained a great deal of valuable trade which could not be organised into convoys. Still, bewildering as the problem looks at first sight, we have but to resolve it into its elements to see that it was by no means insoluble. On analysis its elements fall into three main categories. There were firstly the naval bases, upon which the activity of the protecting fleets depended, and in the neighbourhood of which the homeward-bound convoys collected; secondly, the great lines of passage and communication with the areas to windward of their landfalls, and the defiles through which they had to pass in entering or leaving the islands; and thirdly, the lateral lines of communication by which the various islands were connected, and along which the local and coasting trade was done.

Corresponding to these three categories we find a threefold force assigned to the British station commanders. There was first the two battle squadrons, composed mainly of light ships of the line, that is, "sixties" and "fifties." These, as we shall see, were generally kept concentrated to watch the enemy's naval bases in St. Domingo and Martinique, and prevent their battle squadrons interfering with our arrangements for the attack and defence of commerce. They are almost always to be found in the seas adjacent to the French bases, except when sent further afield to seize or secure the line upon which some important convoy was expected to pass. Secondly, there were the heavier cruisers, of thirty to forty guns, which are generally found stationed at the focal points of the great lines of communication, that is, the landfalls and the defiles, the most important of them being the waters to windward of Barbadoes and of Antigua, and the approaches to the Windward Passage and the

Yucatan Channel. Thirdly, there was the small class of cruiser ranging from twenty-gun frigates to sloops purchased and armed on the station. These are usually to be found cruising along the coastwise routes wherever the enemy's privateers happen to be thickest, and they were consequently most numerous on the Leeward Islands station.[1]

The manner in which the British commanders endeavoured to solve the problem will be most clearly apprehended by watching the system at work during the most difficult period. It is well worth study even to-day, if only to note how entirely the arrangements took their shape from the presence or absence of an enemy's battle fleet. When the war broke out in 1756 the command of the Jamaica station had just been taken over by Rear-Admiral the Hon. George Townshend with three of the line and four frigates. He at once sent his battle squadron off Cap François, and held the Windward Passage with his cruisers, thus covering the North American and homeward-bound British trade, and at the same time barring the French line of passage to Cap François. This excellent position he maintained until the end of May, when he ascertained that Chef d'Escadre Périer de Salvert had eluded him and got into Cap François with four of the line and two frigates, and that he was expecting to be joined by three sail from Martinique under Captain d'Aubigny. This officer had recently reached Fort Royal, and before the declaration of war was known had surprised off that port the *Warwick*, 50, one of our Leeward Islands squadron. Upon

[1] No clear account of the system seems to exist. The above details are gathered from the Admirals' despatches, especially Townshend, March 22, 1756; Cotes, May 8, 1757; Frankland, April 28 and June 26, 1757; Moore, Sept., 1757. See also Captain Middleton to Pringle, Dec. 4, 1759, *Barham Papers* (*Navy Rec. Soc.*), and same to Sir James Douglas, *ibid.*

this Townshend recalled his cruising ships, and, concentrating his whole force at Port Royal, sent a small cruiser to watch De Salvert's movements. In other words, although he was informed that De Salvert's object was to pass the French trade northward, and then go on to Louisbourg, he decided he was too weak for anything but a defensive attitude.[1]

It was the peculiar advantage of the position of Jamaica that at a pinch it afforded to its homeward-bound trade a means of almost absolute security. For when the presence of a superior French squadron at Cap François closed the Windward Passage, the Jamaica squadron, merely by assuming the defensive, could hold open the almost equally good homeward route by way of the Yucatan Channel and the Florida Strait. With the battle squadron massed at Port Royal, and a group of frigates at Cape Antonio, the route was so secure that the main annual convoys appear frequently to have gone that way. It had another great advantage, for the regular convoys were by no means the end of the admirals' anxieties on either station. There was the considerable volume of trade that could not be brought into the regular convoy systems, especially that with North America. When it was convenient this trade sailed with the home convoys till well out of the danger zones, and then parted company. But merchants were constantly calling for convoy for smaller groups of ships. When

[1] Townshend to Cleveland, May 23. In this letter he asks for reinforcements, especially one "capital ship," because, he says, "I cannot consider either the *Dreadnought* or *Princess Mary* in that rank, for in my opinion they can hardly be looked on as of equal force with our new 50-gun ships" —the 60's carrying only 24 and 9 pounders, with 400 men; the 50's, 24 and 12 pounders, with 350 men. Both, he thought, were incapable of lying alongside a French 74. He is using "capital ship" in its old sense of "battleship"; but in 1745 Sir Charles Knowles used it of the first two rates only. *Anson Papers*, vol. ii. Jan. 6.

the Windward Passage was open, they were passed through it and escorted clear of the Crooked Island Passage by the cruising frigates. When it was closed, the Yucatan route still made their voyage possible. The cruisers at Cape Antonio and a small escort to see them clear of the Florida Channel were all that was required. Thus, although Townshend could not act offensively against the French homeward-bound trade, he could perfectly protect his own.

It was some time, however, before he could resume the offensive. Having seen his convoy clear, De Salvert returned to Cap François. There he was joined by D'Aubigny, and found himself in command of five of the line and three frigates. For the rest of the year, therefore, Townshend could do nothing but protect the Jamaica coasts from privateers, and cruise off Cape Tiburon to cover that area, which, we have seen, was the special danger zone on the route of the Jamaica trade coming on from Antigua. By January 1757, however, he had taken a bolder course. De Salvert had apparently left the station with a convoy, for Townshend had now two of his ships of the line cruising off Old Cape on the north of St. Domingo, and thus again was holding the main French route to Cap François and the Windward Passage.[1] He was also holding the line north of Jamaica with his heavy cruisers to prevent supplies reaching Louisiana. For it was another compensation which the defective position of Jamaica gave us in a war with France, that it flanked her only practicable route to the

[1] "Old Cape" or "Old Cape François" is the "Cape Viejo Frances" of modern maps. As to the French route see Lord Hood to Rowley, Nov. 26, 1782 (*Barham Papers*): "I find that tho' the French ships of war with their trade from C. François go out into the sea through the Caycos Passage, yet [they] seldom or ever return that way back, but go to the eastward of the Silver Keys and make the west end of Porto Rico or Cape Samana."

Mississippi, that is, by way of the Yucatan Channel. His third ship of the line, the *Greenwich*, of 50 guns, he sent to pass the trade for Europe through the Windward Passage, and then to join her consorts cruising between Old Cape and Cap François.

Unfortunately it was just at this moment that Lord Loudoun was preparing his attack upon Louisbourg, and that the French were beginning their great naval concentration to save it. The first step, it will be remembered, was that M. de Bauffremont, with five of the line, forced his way through the Straits of Gibraltar with orders to protect and relieve the French West Indies, do all the damage he could to the English, and then in due time proceed to Louisbourg. In pursuance of these well-conceived instructions he was just arriving on the scene, and breaking into Townshend's scattered squadron, he scared it off and captured the *Greenwich*. It was a serious loss, and to make it worse, some French prisoners from a recaptured prize informed the British admiral that De Bauffremont was expecting large reinforcements from France, and that an attack on Jamaica was intended. Once more Townshend felt compelled to call in his cruisers and concentrate at Port Royal, leaving the Windward Passage and the adjacent seas at the mercy of De Bauffremont's cruisers and the enemy's privateers. And not only this. About the last order which Anson had issued before he went out of office with Newcastle in November 1756 was one authorising the commander of the Jamaica station, in case of need, to call for reinforcements from the commander of the Leeward Islands squadron.[1] This very serious step Townshend now took, though with little hope of saving

[1] The order was dated Nov. 9. Newcastle resigned on the 11th. See Townshend's despatch, Mar. 24, 1757, and Frankland's, April 9.

the situation. "As the orders to him," he wrote, "are discretional, I much doubt of any [reinforcement]. It will take long to let him know, as my despatch vessel must beat through the Windward Passage and then stretch a great way to the north before she can fetch the Windward Islands."

The man to whom he appealed was Rear-Admiral Frankland, who had been on the Leeward station some years and knew its possibilities well. Since the surprise of the *Warwick* his squadron was reduced to three weak ships of the line and four or five frigates, a force wholly unequal to the duties of the station.[1] Even as Townshend was calling upon him for help, he himself was writing home for reinforcements. The despatch he penned is of great value as indicating exactly what he regarded as essential for the protection of commerce on his station. The convoy system had been fixed for him. By an order of January 3, 1757, the Admiralty had directed that two convoys should sail for home each year, one at the beginning of June, and the other early enough in July to save the double rate of insurance that was charged on all ships sailing too late to avoid the hurricanes.[2] Such was the volume of trade carried on in this way that the first Leeward Islands convoy of 1757 numbered 170 sail. The whole of it arrived safely, but the responsibility of the admiral may be measured by the fact that it was valued at £2,000,000, and was almost all uninsured.[3] Nor had he a convenient back door like

[1] For the surprise of the *Warwick* by D'Aubigny's squadron, which came out just before Périer de Salvert, see Laird Clowes, vol. iii. p. 290. The French still naïvely claim she was taken by a 30-gun frigate.—Lacour-Gayet, *Marine sous Louis XV.*, p. 366.

[2] Frankland, June 16, 1757. This applies to the Leeward Islands station only. There seems also to have been two from Jamaica.

[3] *Ibid.*, and *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. xxvii. It sailed about June 16, and arrived July 31.

the Yucatan route on the Jamaica station. The homeward-bound Barbadoes trade had always to be fetched up and carried past the French Islands under strong escort to Antigua, where the convoy assembled. Thence his practice was to see it as high as latitude 22° with the bulk of his squadron. At that point it was considered to be out of danger, and the station ships returned, leaving it to its ordinary convoy. Smaller groups of ships that required convoy were dealt with in the same way. It must also be remembered that, unlike the Jamaica admiral, he had two, or rather three, landfall areas to watch, two to windward of Antigua and Barbadoes, and a third about Tobago, the point made by the "Guinea ships"—that is, the slave-traders from the West Coast of Africa. Nor must we forget the swarm of privateers that harassed his local trade.

The system which he submitted to the Admiralty had regard to the whole of these complex duties. His battle squadron he wanted to keep resolutely off Martinique, but he regarded five of the line as necessary for the service. The number and distribution of cruisers he laid down as follows: Two to windward of Barbadoes, and two to windward of Antigua, because, as he says, "all the Jamaica ships make that their route both from Europe and North America"; one to leeward of Antigua, to guard the local trade of Nevis, St. Kitts, and Montserrat; and one in the Virgins, as the English privateers went to "Normansland" to share their plunder. Yet another he would have at Tobago to receive the Guineamen, and over and above these a reserve, so that all could be frequently docked.[1] When Townshend's call reached him he was engaged in preparing to get off the great convoy of 170 sail already mentioned. But as

[1] Frankland to Cleveland, April 28, 1757.

D'Aubigny had left Martinique to join De Bauffremont at Cap François, he did not hesitate to honour his colleague's draft so far as immediately to send him two of his ships of the line. But his frigates he could not part with. He wanted them, as he apologised, for getting off his convoy, and for intercepting the French Guinea-men which were daily expected.

Meanwhile, of course, De Bauffremont had been doing full justice to his orders and playing havoc with our trade, but the anxiety of the two commanders was not prolonged. Pitt was in power, and one of the energetic steps which he took during his short term of office in the winter of 1756-7 was to more than double the squadrons on both the West Indian stations, and to provide each with a new commander-in-chief. To the Jamaica station was appointed Rear-Admiral Thomas Cotes, who had brought home the convoy in the past summer. He was given, in response to Townshend's representations, the *Marlborough* of ninety guns, two "sixties," a fifty, and half-a-dozen frigates, mostly of twenty guns. As there were already two sixties and a fifty on the station, he could count on a battle squadron of seven sail. Steevens, with the East India convoy and reinforcements, sailed with him, as we have seen, on March 13th as far as Madeira. There they parted company, Cotes proceeding westward with a convoy of sixty-six sail. Only six of these, however, were for Barbadoes. He therefore detached them half-way across under convoy of his one heavy cruiser, the *Lynn* (44), and with the rest made direct for Antigua in the usual way. It was the first week in May that he arrived —that is, after a voyage of less than two months, and he had just finished distributing the trade to Nevis, Montserrat, and St. Kitts, when news reached him

from Townshend of De Bauffremont's presence at Cap François, and the loss of the *Greenwich*. The news was accompanied by an order that he was to join the admiral in Port Royal at once, and the same afternoon he sailed. It was a dangerous piece of work. De Bauffremont had shown himself an active officer, and he lay interposed between the two British squadrons with six of the line besides his prize the *Greenwich*, but Cotes was equal to the occasion. Instead of proceeding direct to Port Royal by the dangerous route along the south coast of St. Domingo, he struck south-west till he made the latitude of Dominica (15° 30′), and then "ran down his longitude" due west till he was abreast of the eastern and windward end of Jamaica. Then he stood due north till he made the island, when, after detaching the trade for the ports on the north coast, he ran into Port Royal without having lost a single sail. So far as De Bauffremont was concerned, his caution was unnecessary. The French admiral, in accordance with his programme, had already sailed to join the concentration at Cape Breton. The whole French scheme had been a great success, and in our admiration of the strategy which baffled Loudoun at Louisbourg we must include the cleverness with which the French managed to hold the command in the West Indies so long as the higher strategy permitted, and to attract a large British force to a point where there was nothing to oppose it when it arrived.

No sooner, then, had Cotes taken over the Jamaica command than he knew he was free to carry on his commerce protection without fear of serious disturbance. His first care, after distributing his small cruisers round the island to protect the coasting trade, was for a French convoy which was bringing out supplies and reinforce-

ments for the Mississippi. Two of his light ships of the line were sent to reoccupy the position on the north side of St. Domingo, which Townshend had been forced to abandon, while a second trap, in case they escaped the first, was laid off Cape Antonio with a fifty-gun ship and his heaviest cruiser, the *Lynn*. His intention was to join the first squadron with his flagship and another of the line, but to his great vexation he found the *Marlborough* could not beat up through the Windward Passage, and he had to return to Port Royal. The others, however, did the work, capturing three ships with stores for Cap François and a transport with troops for Louisiana.

According to Cotes's information there were now in Cap François two of the line, the *Greenwich* and three large frigates, most of which were expected to sail with the homeward-bound convoy at the end of the year. Meanwhile he distributed his own squadron so as to occupy with his cruising ships the chief lines of communication at the vital points, and to contain the enemy's main force with his battle squadron by holding the Windward Passage or blockading Cap François. In this way, during the year 1757, he got safely away no less than 150 ships richly laden. In this way, too, he was able to capture more French stores, and so greatly to reduce the privateers that in the autumn he could report the coasting trade secure. So seriously did his arrangements embarrass the French that it was not till October that their convoy was reported definitely as about to sail. Cotes had already sent three of the line to cruise off Cap François, and at their heels, so say the French, went a swarm of hungry British privateers. Another ship of the line was ordered to join them as soon as she was out of the shipwright's hands. Captain Arthur Forrest of the *Augusta* (60) was in command of the squadron, and

with him were the *Edinburgh* (64), under Captain William Langdon, and the *Dreadnought* (60), under Captain Maurice Suckling, the uncle and sea daddy of Nelson. Cotes's flagship was taking her turn in dock. His information as to the strength of the French squadron was wrong, for it had just been joined by the *Redoubtable* under M. de Kersaint, fresh from a raid against our trade and factories on the West Coast of Africa. There he had attacked our unready and dilapidated settlement at Cape Coast Castle. But Mr. Bell the governor had beaten him off with thirty Europeans and a hastily organised force of negroes. Still the havoc he had played with our trade was serious.

It was on October 21st—of famous memory—when, the Cap François convoy being ready to sail, Kersaint, who had come specially to fetch it, put to sea to clear Forrest's squadron from its path. It was now seen that Kersaint instead of two had three ships of the line, besides the *Greenwich*, two of which were 74's. He was thus in a formidable superiority, and Forrest signalled for a council of war. So soon as Suckling and Langdon appeared in the gangway he called to them from the quarter-deck, "Well, gentlemen, you see they are come out to engage us." "I think," cried Suckling, "it would be a pity to disappoint them." Langdon was of Suckling's opinion. So the council ended without their ever setting foot on the quarter-deck, and in two minutes they were rowing back to their ships. Strategically the decision was undoubtedly wrong. The regular station from which they watched Cap François was towards Monte Christi, to windward of the port. It was theirs to attack or not as they liked. So long as they held their ground it was impossible for the convoy to sail. To permit Kersaint to entrap them into an action before their fourth consort joined was simply playing into his hand—the irresponsible impulse

of high-spirited schoolboys rather than a reasoned resolution of serious naval officers. Still on the heels of Byng's caution at Minorca, and of Loudoun's Louisbourg fiasco, it was perhaps an error worth much sound thinking—an error which neither the country nor the service would ever blame. Both had a long score to settle with Kersaint.

The result was only what was to be expected. According to rule, the three captains attacked the three vanships of the enemy, two 74's and a 64. The *Greenwich*, which was fourth, came up to the leading ship's assistance, and as though restive under her new flag, managed to cause such confusion that she fairly clubbed the French squadron and exposed it in a huddled mass to a relentless cannonade, to which little reply could be made. It was soon too much even for Kersaint, and he signalled to his frigates to haul him clear. One by one the shattered ships were extricated, and then the action came to an end. As usual, the French had cut the British rigging to pieces with langrage, and not a single ship could follow. Kersaint retired into Cap François tactically defeated. For the British captains it had been a very honourable affair—praised at the time as one of the finest things the navy had ever done; but the victory was really with Kersaint. He had crippled the British squadron for months. Forrest had to retire to Port Royal to refit, and it was a slow process. In spite of Cotes's urgent entreaties before he sailed to have the dockyard put on a war footing, its resources were still quite inadequate for the work thus suddenly thrown on it, and long before the squadron could get to sea again Kersaint had patched up his ships and was able to sail off with his convoy in triumph.[1]

[1] For this action see Beatson, vol. ii. p. 43; *Naval Chronicle*, vol. xiv. p. 274; Cotes's Despatches, *Admiralty Secretary*, *In-letters*, 235.

On the other hand Cotes was left in complete command of the sea and could split up his battle squadron, with the result that prizes came fast, and British trade, save for a few small coasters, was untouched. The distribution was modified as follows: Cotes himself, being unable to pass the Windward Channel, cruised between Cape Nicolas and the Bite of Leogane at the western extremity of St. Domingo with two of the line, thus blockading Port-au-Prince, while a heavy frigate was stationed off Monte Christi to scout and protect the trade from America. Other units held the Cape Antonio station, and others again cruised on the south side of St. Domingo, holding the line between Jamaica and the Leeward Islands. Before the end of the year Cotes was rewarded by capturing the whole of a convoy from Port-au-Prince, which, though it consisted of only ten ships, was said to be the richest that had ever left that port. It was cleverly done by Captain Forrest single-handed, by manning the first two or three prizes he took and using them as cruisers to support him.[1]

On the Leeward Islands station a similar state of things prevailed except that, as the chief French naval base was on the other station, the fleet was relatively stronger in cruisers. In the summer the command was taken over by Commodore Moore with a squadron of three of the line, two 50's, three 40-gun ships, and five smaller cruisers. It was a force that enabled him to adopt in its entirety the scheme which his predecessor had drawn up. His battle squadron he kept to windward of the south end of Martinique, so as to hold the passage between that island and St. Lucia, which was the regular French line of approach to Fort Royal and St. Pierre,

[1] Beatson, vol. ii. p. 46 and vol. iii. p. 159. The prizes taken were nine, totalling over 3000 tons and 112 guns.

the political and commercial capital of the French Lesser Antilles. His cruisers were disposed in groups at all the points Frankland had designated. In this way he was highly successful in protecting the main trade and in capturing privateers, no less than twenty-five being taken in the first ten months of his command. He had tried to intercept Kersaint, but with the French navy squadrons he had no success. His intelligence always proved false, and this he attributed to a curious cause. Practically the whole of the French trade was now carried on in Dutch bottoms, and these vessels were insured in the British Islands, so, as the commodore lamented, "there is little chance of true intelligence."[1]

It will be seen that all these operations differed from those in the East Indies only in the fact that the destruction and protection of commerce, instead of being confined to the seas as in the West Indies, was in India extended by the traders themselves to the factories. But in neither case was there any true attack upon territory. The pressure which both sides sought to exert and resist was trade pressure and not territorial pressure. Nothing whatever occurred that in the least modified Pitt's policy of concentration in North America, where alone he was making territorial war. Also it should be noticed that the quasi-territorial operations in India did nothing to modify the comparative unimportance of the war in that theatre. The war in the West Indies was and continued to be of far the greater consequence as things were then regarded. Compare the naval forces engaged, and it will be seen clearly enough. Eliminating local armed craft, India had four of the line and three cruisers, while the West Indies absorbed no less than twelve of the line and twenty cruisers, or a fleet equal to that which Byng had

[1] Commodore Moore's Despatches, *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters*, 307.

had in the Mediterranean. The truth is that the interests of both belligerents in the West Indies were much the greater, and the volume of the trade out of all proportion more valuable.

It is no matter for wonder, therefore, that when Pitt began to feel himself strong enough to extend his offensive it was the West Indies and not the East that felt the change. When Pitt sat down to design the immortal campaign of 1759 which now lies before us, he struck an entirely new note, which calls for our first attention. It went to the heart of the whole matter; for diversions and eccentric attack upon the French home coast were abandoned, and in their place we see a direct offensive in the West Indies—an offensive which changes the nature of the war in that area from commerce destruction to true territorial operations.

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CHAPTER XVI

EXTENSION OF THE ATTACK—THE FRENCH ANTILLES

The change in character which came over the operations in the West Indies in 1759 introduces us to a new class of object we have not yet considered. Commerce ceases to be the main object of the operations; territory takes its place. Yet what was aimed at was not conquest in the sense that it was the aim in North America. In the West Indies conquest of the territory against which the operations were directed was still not regarded as the ultimate object of the war; in North America it was. Accordingly, although the extension of the offensive to the West Indies had the appearance of an extension of the main attack, in truth it was more closely akin to eccentric attack. It is a distinction which is often missed. Yet it is of the highest importance, and no correct apprehension of Pitt's strategy is possible until it is thoroughly understood. Let us then endeavour to see exactly how, and why, and when the new departure was conceived.

It was on August 17th that the British Cabinet heard of the capture of Louisbourg, and the question immediately arose as to what was to be done with it. In most games of combined skill and chance—and such is the great game of war—there are moments when a practised player will look at the score and regulate his play accordingly. Such a moment declared itself for Pitt and his colleagues in the autumn of 1758, and the score

stood thus. France was practically beaten at sea, and there was a strong party at Versailles that was calling for the abandonment of all naval effort and the concentration of the whole national force upon the land war. In that sphere there was more hope. Ferdinand had just been forced to repass the Rhine, though on the other hand he had succeeded in joining hands with the British force which had been sent to Emden under Marlborough to assist him, and there was little chance of his being thrust back into Hanover during the current campaign. Howe and Bligh, with the rest of the expeditionary force, had sailed against Cherbourg. News had just come that they had occupied it. Pitt, it will be remembered, had immediately resolved to reinforce them and hold the place. Two days, however, after the news of Louisbourg was received the expedition had reappeared in Portland Road, and it was known that Cherbourg had been destroyed and evacuated. Three days later, Newcastle was informing the Chancellor of the Exchequer that no reinforcements were to be sent to Bligh, but a thousand Highlanders and two thousand regular infantry were to go out to repair losses in America. For Newcastle this was to play without due regard to the score. In his view the loss of Louisbourg would force France to make overtures for peace, which we on our side would have to entertain. The enormous strain on our finances which the war was causing left us no choice, in his opinion, but to bring it to an end at the first reasonable opportunity. Louisbourg, he thought, would certainly have to be given up as before, as the only way of getting back Minorca and saving Flanders from becoming French. Louisbourg ought, therefore, to be destroyed at once. But, as he lamented to Hardwicke, the King "and some of his Ministers" insisted we must keep

it, take Canada, and drive the French from America altogether.[1]

But Pitt, too, was looking at the score. He, too, saw clearly how difficult it would be, as things stood, to keep Louisbourg, if negotiations for peace were forced upon him in the coming winter; but it was not his way to stand, like Newcastle, wringing his hands over a difficulty. For him a difficulty was something to be removed. Accordingly, in the first week of September, Newcastle became aware that Pitt and Cleveland, the Secretary of the Admiralty, were quietly working out a scheme for the conquest of Martinique. At first Newcastle did not grasp what it meant, and he remarked to Hardwicke that, if successful, it would give the *coup de grâce* to French trade.[2] In other words, he regarded the project as still a mere question of commerce destruction. This was natural enough, for not only was it the richest of the French islands, but its chief town was the seat of government and the entrepot and rendezvous of the whole French trade, just as Havana was for that of Spain. Yet, as he became aware of the magnitude of Pitt's plan, he grew more and more nervous, till the news of the St. Cas disaster quite upset him. Pitt, instead of giving up the idea of his diversions on the French coast, wanted them to continue vigorously in order to cover the expedition against Martinique, and Newcastle lamented that Anson had not come in from before Brest to advise him. He was further agitated by a flood of petitions that began to pour in upon him, praying for the retention of Louisbourg. It was clear that commercial circles, of whom he always stood in awe, and especially the Northern manufacturers, would not

[1] Newcastle to Hardwicke, Aug. 26, *Newcastle Papers*, 32,883.
[2] Newcastle to Hardwicke, Sept. 4, *ibid.*, 32,883.

hear of the place being given up a second time. Louisbourg privateers had long been the curse of their trade, and besides, the conquest of Canada would mean a great extension of the Western market. Hardwicke tried to comfort him with the reflection that the petitions for retaining Louisbourg were only "Mob-politics." The place would certainly have to be given up at the peace, and it had better be destroyed at once. Anson, when he came in, only confirmed Newcastle's anxiety. The admiral was afraid, if Pitt had his way, we should find we had sent away all our ships just when we wanted them most, and he did not at all relish the expedition to Martinique. He said, however, that he considered it settled, and would not interfere. Pitt was now calling for six thousand troops for his new enterprise, and six of the line; but it was some relief that he promised Newcastle to drop all other expeditions, except the small one against Senegal and Goree, which Anson approved.[1] In vain Newcastle protested that the country could not bear the expense of both the American and the European war. Pitt only retorted that if that were so, he would recall the whole of the troops from the Continent and employ them in expeditions. The King and he were absolutely resolved that they must keep Louisbourg and Canada, and get Martinique into their hands to exchange for Minorca when it came to making peace.[2] So on November 12th, in spite of all opposition, the expedition sailed.

The intention of Pitt's new departure is thus perfectly plain. The expedition to Martinique was not a piece of mere commerce defence or destruction, nor was it strictly

[1] Newcastle to Hardwicke, Sept. 17 and 19, and Hardwicke's reply *ibid.*; *Cabinet Memoranda*, &c., *ibid.*, 32,998, f. 172, Sept. 20.
[2] Newcastle to Hardwicke, Oct. 19, 1758, *ibid.*, 32,884.

an extension of the main attack. It was in truth an eccentric attack, rendered politically necessary for the attainment of the main object. Pitt's temporary abandonment of his diversions on the coast of France indicate no change of plan, no unsteadiness of faith in his system. The political and military exigencies which had called for these expeditions were now satisfied by the presence of Marlborough and his British brigades in Ferdinand's camp. The substitution of the expedition against Martinique shows rather how firm and clear was his hold upon the central lines of the war, how astutely he grasped the moment for developments in subsidiary detail. The dominant note is still the conquest of Canada and the expulsion of France from North America. To that end every interest and every consideration must subserve, with one exception and one only, and that was our position in the Mediterranean.

Ever since William the Third had sent thither the Main Fleet it had become a settled principle of our policy that England's position in Europe depended ultimately on her power of making herself felt in the old womb of empire. And even in this war, which at first sight seems to have less to do with the Mediterranean than with any sphere of action, the principle was not forgotten. Till Louisbourg was taken Pitt had concentrated his whole attack upon the French position in North America, but the moment the key was in his hands the old necessity forced itself to the front. Unless we could reassert ourselves in the Mediterranean the conquest could not be maintained. No gain in the West could compensate us for the loss of Minorca, and unless its recovery could be made secure Louisbourg would have to be relinquished, as it had been in the last war. Pitt knew, as every great strategist except perhaps Napoleon has known, that to

conquer the territory in dispute is not enough. There still remains the often far more difficult task of forcing your enemy to accept the situation. That was the meaning of the expedition to Martinique. A lesser genius perhaps would have struck a direct blow at Minorca itself, but that was too crude a means for Pitt's subtlety. Minorca, as we have seen, was wholly eccentric to the main object of the war. Martinique was not. It formed, as the French had been skilfully demonstrating, an invaluable advanced base on their line of passage to the St. Lawrence and the Mississippi, and thus in a sense the intended operation against it was an extension of the main attack. If for political reasons an eccentric attack becomes necessary, an adequate objective—that is, one that will give the political results desired—must be chosen which is the least eccentric. Martinique exactly fulfilled these conditions, with the added advantage that its capture would give the best possible defence for a most valuable commerce and the shrewdest blow to French finance. Few decisions in the war are more eloquent of Pitt's intuition for the higher strategy than his quick perception of the moment when it came and his unhesitating clutch of the objective which the crisis demanded.

That lesser men should grasp the importance of the move was not to be expected, and it was with great difficulty that Pitt could find a general to accept the command. It is a commonplace to credit him with a remarkable talent for choosing commanders. Yet surely no great War Minister ever appointed so many bad ones. Probably most if not all of his mistakes were forced upon him. In this case, in spite of previous warning, he had to be content with an old and worn-out officer, Major-General Hopson, who accepted the command, like poor Bligh, in the spirit of a martyr, protesting it was his duty

not to refuse any command for which his King thought him fit.[1]

It was the King with his inveterate dislike of young commanders who was probably to blame. Pitt's choice was certainly Colonel Barrington, one of that remarkable band of brothers of whom the Secretary at War was the head. Though quite a junior officer he was made, in spite of his elder brother's honourable protests, second in command, with the local rank of major-general. The military force which they took out consisted of six fresh battalions and, with artillery, numbered about six thousand men. Besides these part of the 38th, who were in garrison at Antigua, and the second battalion of the Royal Highlanders from Scotland, were ordered to join them, and there was in the fleet a whole battalion of marines. The escorting squadron was eight of the line, under Commodore Robert Hughes, but on their arrival at Barbadoes early in January they found Moore already there to take over the command. He had thus under his flag, besides the units engaged in commerce protection, a fleet of ten of the line, three "40-gun ships," as he calls them, and two frigates.[2]

After a short delay of a fortnight to allow their large hospital-ship and other straggling vessels to close up, a

[1] Beatson, vol. ii. p. 228. Beatson is an original authority for this expedition as well as for that against Rochefort. He served in it as an engineer-officer (*Dict. Nat. Biog.*). The naval and military despatches are in *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters*, 307, and *S.P. Colonial* (*America and West Indies*), 100. Commodore Moore's *Journal* gives additional particulars. The military operations are excellently given by Mr. Fortescue, *History of the British Army*, vol. ii. p. 347 *et seq.* Several of the documents are printed in Mante's *History of the Late War in America.*

[2] *S.P. Colonial*, 100, Jan. 12, 1759. It will be remembered that the true frigate of thirty guns had only recently been introduced. Moore apparently regards his old two-decked 44-gun frigates as no longer worthy of the name. Beatson always calls them simply "men-of-war." See *post*, vol. ii. p. 370.

delay which was profitably employed in practising disembarkations, the whole force sailed for Martinique, intent on striking the first blow upon the French naval base at Fort Royal. A landing was easily effected just to the north of the bay, between Cas Navires Bay and Point Negro, which the marines had previously seized, and the adjacent batteries were destroyed by the fleet. All was skilfully and correctly done, but a reconnaissance quickly revealed that in this case the usual results could not be secured. The citadel lay so high, and was so well placed, that the ships could not batter it, and the country between it and the landing-place was regarded as impossible for the siege-train. It is true that the commodore offered to land the guns at the point of the bay, and that the seamen should drag them thence into position. The difficulties were too great for the old general to face; his advanced parties had already been roughly handled by the militia that swarmed in the broken and wooded ground before him, and to every one's surprise he gave the order to re-embark.

It was a disheartening beginning, and the expedition seemed doomed to the ignominious fate that had dogged its predecessors. Forced to do something, the council of war decided to attempt St. Pierre, the civil and commercial capital, but with no definite intention, for it was clear that unless they could possess themselves of Fort Royal it was impossible to hold the island. Still, to St. Pierre they went. In spite of its citadel and forts it was obviously an easy nut to crack, and under its guns lay a number of merchantmen and privateers that would give some return for their trouble. But commerce destruction was not the object of the expedition, and Moore saw clearly that nothing was to be gained where they were. He therefore took upon himself to

propose to the general formally in writing an undertaking by which alone, in his view, the object of the expedition could be achieved. A council of war was immediately called, and Moore laid his project before it. He was quite ready, he said, to go in and destroy the forts of St. Pierre if it were so decided, but he could not promise his fleet would be good for any further enterprise after the work was done, and every one knew that the destruction of St. Pierre would bring them no nearer the conquest of Martinique than they were before. He therefore boldly proposed to leave it alone and try Guadeloupe instead. It was the second objective mentioned in their instructions: it was an island even richer than Martinique, and not nearly so strongly occupied; and above all, in his eyes, it was the base from which the French privateers most grievously distressed our Leeward Islands and North American trade.[1] For Pitt's purpose, therefore, it was scarcely less suitable as an objective than Martinique; while from the point of view of commerce protection it was probably better. The council of war seems to have been delighted at the unexpected lead. The general at once agreed, and to the disgust of gentlemen with a fondness for prize-money the French ships were left untouched, and an immediate move was made for Basseterre, the capital of Guadeloupe. The decision was probably right. Moore, as we shall see, had quite a remarkable faculty for concentrating his attention on the main object in view. In

[1] Moore's Despatches, Jan. 30, 1759, *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters*, 307; Hopson to Pitt, Jan. 20, *S.P. Colonial* (*America and West Indies*), 100; Moore to Hopson, Jan. 19, *ibid.* In this letter the commodore formally proposed the change of objective. See also Colonel Haldane's report, in which he says he was not consulted about the reasons for not attacking St. Pierre, "as these matters were entirely a transaction between the general and the commodore."—*Add. MSS.* 32,887, Jan. 30.

this case he had set his hand to the conquest of territory, and he was not to be turned from it a hair's-breadth by the most tempting opportunities of commerce destruction.

Basseterre, which lay along the shore of a shallow bay dominated by a well-built citadel and a number of shore batteries, presented on reconnaissance a very formidable appearance on its sea front—so formidable, indeed, that our chief engineer officer pronounced it impregnable to ship attack.[1] Moore thought otherwise, and was resolved to try. It proved a tough piece of work, and the determination with which it was carried out roused the old general to something like enthusiasm. "I cannot omit," he wrote to Pitt, "mentioning to you, sir, the very great resolution and perseverance which appeared in the officers of His Majesty's ships of war when attacking the forts and batteries. It was so remarkable that it would be an injustice not to acquaint you with it."[2] All day they stuck to it, suffering very severely in their rigging, but Moore would not let go, and "at last," as he reverently wrote home, "with the assistance of Divine Providence we silenced all the batteries." It was too late to land the same evening, and, apparently with the idea of keeping the enemy in confusion, the bomb-vessels threw some carcasses into the town. The unhappy result was that the whole place was burnt to the ground, with vast quantities of rum, sugar, and other produce of enormous value. It was a useless, reckless piece of destruction, which every one regretted, and, indeed, no one seems to have contemplated. Next afternoon the place was evacuated as our men landed, the French governor very properly falling back into the

[1] For Map of Guadeloupe, see vol. ii. p. 255.
[2] Moore to Pitt, Jan. 30, 1759, *S.P. Colonial* (*America and West Indies*), 100.

interior to hold the passes into the rich Capes Terres, which lay behind the mountains, and to rally the island militia.[1]

So far success had been snatched from failure, but the old general did his best to throw it away. His young brigadiers were eager to push the French before they could recover the first blow; but, wholly unfitted by age and training for such warfare, Hopson could not rise to the risks it entailed, and could only sit down and secure his position as though he had been making rhythmic war in Flanders. The troops, kept either in demoralising idleness or in deadly labour upon the fortifications of the citadel, began to drop in scores. Moore did his best to keep things going with the fleet. Guadeloupe is really two islands separated by an inlet called the Little Cul-de-Sac, which penetrates between them from the southward and finds its way by a shallow and swampy channel into the Great Cul-de-Sac to the northward. The island in which they had landed was Guadeloupe proper, or, as it was sometimes called, Basseterre. The other and more northerly was Grandeterre. Its chief town was Fort Louis, which lay at the entrance of the Little Cul-de-Sac, and between that place and Petit Bourg on the Basseterre side of the inlet was the ordinary line of communication between the two islands. To seize Fort Louis was to sever that communication, and Moore had set his heart on doing it. Begging a few companies of Highlanders from the general to strengthen his own marines, about ten days after the occupation of Basseterre, he despatched Captain Harman with a squadron of six sail to try his hand. By

[1] Colonel Haldane, however, says a French officer informed them the evacuation of the citadel was a mistake, caused by an A.D.C. giving a wrong message to the governor.—*Add. MSS.* 32,887, Jan. 20.

February 13th the thing was done. Basseterre could not be reinforced from Grandeterre, and Grandeterre lay open to the army. Still, for all his brigadiers' eagerness Hopson could not be stirred into activity, and the army must quickly have rotted away but that, on February 27th, the old general himself was taken.

No sooner was the volley fired over his grave than Barrington, the man of Pitt's choice, sprang into the saddle and seized the reins. A whole month had been worse than wasted. The muster showed less than three thousand troops fit for duty. Nevertheless all was now in movement. Knowing that with his reduced force it was too late to push over the hills into the rich and populous Capes Terres, Barrington decided to shift his base. His idea was to get what remained of his troops into the transports again, land them at Fort Louis, and so force himself into the centre of the French position. Moore heartily approved. A battalion had to be left to garrison Basseterre, and Moore told off two of his largest ships of the line to support them. The worst of the sick were sent up to Antigua, and with all the troops that remained, scarce fifteen hundred, Moore and Barrington sailed for Fort Louis on March 7th. The trade wind was now blowing hard, and the voyage meant a heavy beat in the teeth of it against a lee current. It was the 11th before they reached Fort Louis, and even then most of the transports were nowhere to be seen. It was a trying situation as it stood, but it was soon to be far worse. For scarcely had Barrington landed when the commodore received intelligence which transformed the whole position, and gave to the little campaign its peculiar strategical interest. The news was nothing less than that four or five days before M. de Bompart, with a powerful squadron of eight of the line and three frigates from

Brest, had been seen north of Barbadoes. By this time he must be in Fort Royal, where another seventy-four would bring his battle squadron up to nine.

To appreciate the difficult dilemma in which Moore found himself, we must remember that besides the expedition he had still the commerce protection of the station on his shoulders. The time was approaching when he would have to send off the large convoys. This of course would greatly reduce his strength, and already before leaving Basseterre he had written home showing the absolute necessity for reinforcements.[1] Moreover, with his efforts to protect commerce he was doing his best to assist the military operations by establishing a blockade of the island, so as to prevent its receiving supplies. Having found out that they were coming in large quantities from the Dutch island of St. Eustatius, he had even gone so far as establish a blockade there also.[2] All these services were of vital importance, and might well have confused less clear-headed officers than Moore and Barrington. But Moore saw perfectly straight. For him there was now but one preoccupation, and that was the enemy's fleet: for him there was but one place for his ships, and that was massed at the point from which he could most easily strike the French admiral if he attempted to relieve Guadeloupe. Lying where he did at Fort Louis, he did not hold an interior position, and under prevailing conditions of weather he could not make sure of striking Bompart before Bompart could strike at Basseterre. At all costs such a position must

[1] Moore to Cleveland, March 6, *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters*, 307.

[2] This very questionable extension of belligerent rights should be compared with the Federal attempt to blockade New Providence, the chief base of our blockade-runners in the Bahamas during the American Civil War, an attempt we strongly resented and stopped. Hobart Pasha did the same at the Piræus during the Cretan rebellion shortly afterwards.

be found, and he did not hesitate a moment. In the midst of Barrington's troubles he went to him and told him he must leave him at once. He meant, he said, to call in all his cruising ships and concentrate his fleet at Prince Rupert's Bay, in the north of the neutral island of Dominica, that is, to interpose it between Bompart's base at Fort Royal and the British army.

His reasons for choosing Prince Rupert's Bay were clearly placed before the council of war, and the military staff put in full possession of his strategical idea. Firstly, it was the only place in which his scattered detachments could be quickly got together. Secondly, it would enable him to refresh his men and have intercourse with Barrington by his small vessels. Thirdly, it would enable him to keep up communication with the Leeward Islands and his base at Antigua. Fourthly, he would be able to support the operations of the army. In all this, it will be observed, there was no suggestion of making the enemy's fleet his objective, strictly speaking, for he was not taking the offensive against it directly. His fifth consideration explains that he deliberately rejected this idea, not for want of strategical knowledge, but for well-considered reasons which seemed to him good. If, he said, he sailed against Bompart at Fort Royal he would only find the French squadron so disposed that he could not attack it unless the admiral wanted an action. That is, he clearly saw the fallacy of our crude modern dictum that the proper course in these cases is always to seek out the enemy's fleet and attack it. He saw that to take such a course was to sacrifice the advantages of the defensive by lengthening his line of supply; for, as he explained, if he took the position before Fort Royal the whole of his cruisers would be consumed in bringing water and stores to the fleet, and he would not be able

to communicate with his base at Antigua under seven days.[1] In this he was undoubtedly right. If, for securing the object in hand, the defensive is all that is necessary, it is bad warfare to take the weaker form by assuming the offensive. In this case, to take the offensive with the fleet was quite superfluous. The offensive was the function of the army. The function of the fleet was to cover its operations by taking such a defensive position as would enable it to deliver a counter-attack on Bompart if he moved to molest those operations. They and they alone could secure the object in view—which was the conquest of Guadeloupe. The French fleet did not become a primary objective for Moore until it moved to interfere.[2]

Convinced by the commodore's clear exposition, Barrington made no demur. He must have seen the right course as clearly as Moore. Though his transports were still scattered over the sea, and his troops, all told, a mere handful for the work before him, he even gave Moore three hundred men whom he asked for to fill up the gaps in his marines. He had just received three hundred and fifty volunteers from Antigua, which made the sacrifice more easy; yet there was surely something heroic in it, and, if only for this, Barrington's name should live as an honoured example in the annals of an island power.

On March 13th Moore sailed away, leaving Barrington,

[1] Mante, *History of the Late War in America*.

[2] Civil opinion in the islands was highly dissatisfied with Moore's strategy. They held that he should have made a move to Fort Royal which would have forced Bompart to engage a superior force, or else to retire under the citadel and leave the anchorage to Moore. Whether or not this was possible, Moore, having just attempted Fort Royal, was probably the best judge. See Mante, *op. cit.* See also "Remembrance of the Council and Assembly of Barbadoes against Commodore Moore's Conduct."—*Barham Papers.*

in return for his troops, one of the heavy forty-fours, two or three of the bomb-ketches, and a few sloops. Barrington, as he modestly put it, had determined to try to hold on a little longer. His way of doing so was a fine example of how such work should be done. By using his armed transports as cruisers, and by hiring and arming local craft, he was able, with the help of the vessels Moore had left him, to make his force completely amphibious. Fort Louis proved to be a weak position to hold against operations from the land side, and the French were gathering to attack. In face of this difficulty, Barrington's way of holding on was to get half his force to sea, and strike behind the enemy's back. Thus three ports along the south coast—St. Francis, St. Anne, and Le Gosier—were attacked simultaneously; all were taken and destroyed; and then the force at Le Gosier, pushing inland, struck the rear of the French that were investing Fort Louis. By this time all Barrington's transports had come in, and Moore had sent him another forty-four. He proceeded at once to repeat his operations against the opposite or Basseterre half of the island. The place he chose for his next blow was Arnouville, which lay at the bottom of the Little Cul-de-Sac, close to the mouth of the Le Coin river. The line of this river the French had entrenched to cover Houelburg, the port in the Great Cul-de-Sac to which came their supplies from St. Eustatius.[1] From this position his movement dislodged them, and then by a masterly use of his sea transport, he pushed them south towards his own garrison at Basseterre.

[1] These topographical particulars I take from *The Natural and Civil History of the French Dominions in North and South America*, Part II., 1760. Dedicated to Barrington by Thomas Jeffreys, Geographer to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales. The map of Guadeloupe, p. 79, shows Arnouville, which no other map seems to do. See Fortescue, *History of British Army*, vol. ii. p. 354, *note*.

Now splitting up his force, now combining it again, and perpetually shifting his base, he gave the enemy no rest, and was always striking in on their flank or rear before ever they could settle themselves in a new position. It was not till a week after Moore had left him that his last transport came in, but in a month he had completely paralysed Grandeterre, and had penetrated into the rich Capes Terres of Guadeloupe proper. Then, thoroughly disheartened, the French gave up. The ground seemed to slip from under their feet wherever they tried to stand, and to see so active and determined an enemy in the midst of their richest plantations, with no sign of relief from Martinique, was more than the colonists could endure. Finally, on May 1st, weary of waiting for Bompart's fleet to save them, they induced the governor to sign a capitulation.

To all appearance Moore's strategy had been entirely successful; but now occurred the dramatic event in which culminated the strategic interest of the campaign. The very day after the capitulation was signed, Bompart appeared at St. Anne's, the little port on the southern side of Grandeterre which Barrington had destroyed and abandoned. With him was the Marquis de Beauharnais, governor of Martinique, with a regular battalion of Swiss, a large number of Colonial volunteers, and a quantity of spare arms and ammunition. It was a force which exceeded in numbers that of Barrington, and had Beauharnais arrived a few days earlier, Guadeloupe could not have been taken. How was it then that Moore's apparently excellent dispositions had failed? From a naval point of view this is the most difficult feature in the campaign, and well worth careful examination.

What then had he been doing since he left Barrington, and how had Bompart evaded him? He proceeded

direct to Rupert's Bay, and there anchored his fleet and kept it at anchor. "The keeping the squadron together," he afterwards insisted, "was the only certain means of giving security to our islands," and he further explained that he kept it at anchor because if he had put to sea his heavy ships would certainly have been blown to leeward.[1] In another despatch which he wrote while he was lying in Rupert's Bay he explained that he had chosen that station because it was the most convenient place for watching the enemy's motions, giving assistance to Barrington's army, and protecting our Leeward Islands.[2] There was also apparently another object in view. It might be that Jamaica was Bompart's real objective, and so strongly was this felt that Colonel Haldane, who was one of Barrington's brigadiers and also governor-elect of Jamaica, left the army at the same time as Moore in order to place his island in a state of defence.

That Bompart would strike neither at Basseterre nor Fort Louis, nor at any of the suggested objectives, but at the windward side of Grandeterre, seems to have occurred to no one. Seeing how entirely the strategical conditions of the station turned on windward and leeward, the omission is difficult to explain. But even assuming there was good reason for it, it would still be difficult to justify the actual position which Moore had taken up. Setting aside the windward side of Grandeterre as a possible objective altogether, there still existed a complication of alternative objectives sufficient to have brought into play the old rule which Moore was transgressing. Drake had laid it down long ago, when the great Armada was gathered at Lisbon and no one knew for certain at which of three or four possible objectives it intended to strike.

[1] See his despatch of July 25, *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters*, 307.
[2] April 11, *ibid.*

The father of warfare under sail had then pointed out that the knot was only to be cut by going boldly forth and lying to windward of the point from which the enemy's fleet was to sail. In other words, the only sure course was to take up a position which would make certain of bringing the enemy to action if he attempted to reach any of the objectives. Drake, as we know, was not allowed to turn his plan into an object-lesson, or probably the rule would have become a commonplace in the British service. It was in not observing it that Moore broke down. Admirable as was his general conception, he made the mistake—possibly unavoidable, as we shall see—of getting to windward of the presumed objectives instead of getting to windward of the enemy's fleet. For "to windward" read "within striking distance," and the lesson is vital to-day as it was then or in the Armada year. Where the objective is absolutely certain, that is, where the nature of the war or your own operations have reduced all possible objectives to one only, as in the case of Rojesvenski's attempt to reach Vladivostok, then to lie within striking distance of the enemy's approach, may be right enough. But in Moore's case the objective could not be certain; the most astute reasoning could never be sure of not having missed one alternative at least.

This was what Moore had done, and yet so sure was he that he was covering every possible objective that he expected Bompart would have to attack him where he lay before he could do anything. An intercepted letter assured him that this was not the French admiral's intention, but still he felt no uneasiness. It was not till the day after the capitulation of Guadeloupe was signed that his security was shaken, and even then it was not by his own cruisers that his eyes were opened. On May 21st he was informed by some merchantmen, and the information was confirmed

next day by a frigate which was on its way out from England to reinforce him, that the French fleet had been seen to windward of Mariegalante, that is, between him and Barrington. It was sailing due north, direct for Grandeterre. Moore weighed immediately, but Bompart had clearly beaten him. Instead of coming up inside the islands, as Moore expected, he had passed round the south end of Martinique, and so had reached unobserved a point from which he must strike Grandeterre long before Moore could be upon him. For five days the baffled British commodore struggled to beat through the passage between Dominica and the Saints. His intention, so he said, if he could only get far enough to windward, was to land his marines behind the French and so "secure them between two fires." He also, it seems, hoped to intercept Bompart on his return to Martinique. But all was in vain. He had not got even past Mariegalante when he heard that Guadeloupe had capitulated and that Bompart had passed back again round the south of Martinique under the guns of Fort Royal.

It was a clear case of a bad position, but we must not assume hastily that there was a better one open to Moore. We know that in the view of the great admirals of the next war the correct but by no means perfect station for watching Fort Royal was to windward of it, in one of the leeward bays of St. Lucia. Here was the position which Rodney and his colleagues in the next war were wont to use, taught very possibly by Moore's failure. It is in any case remarkable that the first stroke of that war in the West Indies was the seizure of St. Lucia by Barrington's brother, the admiral. Even more remarkable still is the fact that as Moore lay in Rupert's Bay the correct position had been already discovered, probably by Anson, perhaps by Pitt himself. The very first despatch

sent from home after the capitulation of Basseterre was known, contained an order from Pitt to take St. Lucia. His idea was to secure there a safe station for the hurricane season, and nothing, he said, could be "so essential to all operations for the distress and ruin of the French Islands." So great, indeed, was the importance he attached to the occupation that he went so far as to authorise the general to retain the section of his force which previously he had been instructed to send on to join the grand attack on Quebec.[1] In the reply we have an explanation of Moore's apparent error. Apart from the fact that a station at St. Lucia would have burdened still further his communications with his base at Antigua, the island was not open to him. For although it was by treaty a neutral island, the French had occupied it and erected batteries to command its anchorages.[2] With an army dependent on him, Moore could scarcely risk seizing them with his fleet alone, as Drake seized Cape Sagres in 1587, and Barrington could spare nothing to help him. When the general received Pitt's order he could only reply that his forces were too much exhausted to occupy St. Lucia and hold Guadeloupe as well, especially as the forts, as he had been informed, lay too high for the guns of the fleet to reach, and Moore agreed with him. He added further that the commodore did not consider the island a safe station in the hurricane months, though Moore in his own despatch did not take the objection.

[1] Pitt to Hopson and to Moore, March 9 and 12, Barrington to Pitt, May 9, and Moore to same, May 11, *S.P. Colonial* (*America and West Indies*), 78 and 100. The order appears to have reached Moore on April 17, by Captain Taylor of the *Griffon*. See Moore's Despatches, May 11, *Admiralty Secretary*, *In-letters*, 307.

[2] They had occupied it in Oct. 1755, that is, after British reprisals had begun but before declaration of war. Frankland, who then commanded on the station, replied by ordering his captains to detain all French vessels. —Frankland to Cleveland, Nov. 14, 1755, *In-letters*, 306.

Barrington, however, found strength enough to complete his conquest by seizing all the islands that belonged to the Guadeloupe group, that is, Mariegalante, Deseada, the Saints, and Petite-Terre. Moore held his ground at Rupert's Bay till the end of May, and the position was at any rate good enough to prevent any fresh interference from Martinique.

About this time he sent his cruisers off Barbadoes to receive a convoy that was coming from home, and was reinforced by two more "sixties," which had brought it out. This gave him all the superiority he required, and he took complete command of the sea. He himself moved his headquarters to Basseterre, to assist Barrington in finally settling the occupation of Guadeloupe. In accordance with Pitt's original instructions, three regiments and some artillery were established as a garrison. The Highlanders, and all drafts that could be spared, were sent on to Louisbourg, where the main attack was now developing, and on June 25th Barrington, with the remaining three battalions, sailed for home. This done, the commodore moved on to Antigua to turn his attention to commerce protection, which he had been compelled so long to neglect.

Since the appearance of Bompart on the scene had forced a close concentration of the British squadron, the French privateers, which before that had been well kept in hand, had been preying on our commerce almost unmolested.[1] Now Moore's cruisers were loosed upon them again, while he turned his attention to getting off the long-delayed home trade. He had made up his mind to send the whole of it home in one convoy. In due course, therefore, the bulk of the squadron went down to Barbadoes to fetch up the

[1] Mante, *op. cit.*

trade of that island in the usual way, and by the end of July, in time to save double insurance, he had gathered at St. Kitts over three hundred sail of merchantmen. They were enormously rich, and their escort was in proportion. It consisted of eight of the line, including his two three-decked ships, and of all his bomb-vessels. This was in accordance with the instructions he received when Hughes brought out the expedition.[1] But in any case the precaution of a large escort must have been taken, for Moore could not tell where Bompart was. During all the movements which the collection of the convoy had entailed, he had not been tempted into giving Moore a chance of engaging him. Once, it is true, he had ventured as far as Grenada to revictual that island, but only to hurry back to Martinique the moment Moore's cruisers found him. Moore made no further effort to get at him, but devoted himself to his convoys. He wrote to the Admiralty, apologising for not having brought him to action, but, as he said, it would always be possible for Bompart to avoid fighting him unless he was strong enough to divide his fleet. When the hour came for the great convoy to sail, the French squadron had last been reported off the west of Puerto Rico, steering north-west, as though making for Cap François; but Moore refused to be disturbed by the report into detaining the convoy any longer. He did not believe it, and he was so far right that Bompart was heard of no more, and the whole convoy reached home safely in September.[2]

[1] *Admiralty Secretary, Out-letters*, 1331, Oct. 14, 1758.

[2] The report of Bompart's whereabouts seems to have been true, though Moore disbelieved it. According to Lacour-Gayet, Bompart finished the campaign by revictualling St. Domingo. Thence he returned to Brest, ballasted with Colonial produce, on Nov. 7.—*Marine de Louis XV.*, p. 368, and Waddington, vol. iii. pp. 358–9.

With Bompart's escape, the storm which had been brewing in the Colonies against Moore broke over his head. As has been said, the concentration which Bompart's presence and Barrington's expedition had forced upon him had left the seas open to the French privateers, and local convoy had been impossible to obtain. The enormous losses that ensued might have been borne patriotically if Moore had only brought the French squadron to action, but that he failed in both his duties was more than they could endure. A joint committee of the Council and Assembly of Barbadoes sent home a formal and bitter remonstrance against so incompetent a commander-in-chief. "The disgrace to his Majesty's navy," they said, "had not been the only melancholy consequence of this unparalleled neglect. . . . No less than 175 or 180 sail of vessels have been carried into Martinique since the arrival of Bompart's squadron, which we once flattered ourselves were come only to add to the spoils of Britain. . . . Could we assign one argument in favour of the commodore's proceedings, our charity, if not our personal regard, had wrought in us to stifle our suspicions of his ill-conduct."[1] Yet one argument there was. Of all theatres of naval war there is none wherein it was proved so easy as the West Indies for a commander to decline an action; none where a defensive attitude was so difficult to deal with. The long story culminated in Nelson himself being baffled by Villeneuve. Who, then, can throw a stone at Moore? Further, it must be noted that the failure to protect commerce was not entirely due to Moore or any other naval officer. Diplomacy had saddled them with a cartel arrangement which made their task a labour of Sisyphus. It had been agreed that prisoners

[1] *Barham Papers.*

might not be sent home; they had to be exchanged on the spot. The consequence was that, no matter how many privateers were captured, their number never decreased. Ships were to be had in abundance, and the men who, but for the unlucky cartel agreement, could not have been replaced, were continually returning refreshed from British prisons to the scenes of their depredations. "Has not the squadron," wrote a sorely tried naval officer at the end of 1759, "within these two years past taken upwards of fifty privateers, and have they not more at this day than ever was known from the French islands?"[1] The arrangement appears to have been the Colonials' own seeking, but that, as usual, only made them the less inclined to make allowances for the trouble it gave.

The Colonials were not, however, alone in their estimate of the campaign. Even in England its results were hardly appreciated, at least by the public. They had barely heard of Guadeloupe; for, since its trade was compelled to clear from St. Pierre, all French produce from the Caribbees was supposed to come from Martinique. Its value, so Barrington wrote to Pitt, was unknown in England, though it grew more sugar than all the rest of the French Leeward Islands together. Moore sent assurances to the same effect, and Pitt at least was satisfied. By him, at any rate, the service was handsomely acknowledged. He knew he had now in his hands a pledge which would at least weigh heavy in the scales of peace against Minorca.

[1] Captain Middleton to Pringle, Dec. 4, 1759, *Barham Papers*.

CHAPTER XVII

THE MAIN ATTACK, 1759—THE ADVANCE ON QUEBEC

By the time that Barrington found himself in a position to send on part of his force to Louisbourg, the main attack was fully developed. The great expedition was already in the St. Lawrence, and the help from the West Indies never reached it. There had been no pause in Pitt's implacable advance and no tremble in his indomitable purpose. Winter compelled the forces to mark time till the spring unloosed the ways. That was all. Both by sea and land the attack had stopped far short of what his sanguine nature had expected. But that was only a reason for pushing on more resolutely than ever. In 1758, so soon as Pitt knew by the first reports from Louisbourg that it would be impossible to carry out his whole scheme in one campaign, he had begun to prepare for another. The first week in July he had directed the Admiralty to provide winter stores for ten of the line, and the very day Louisbourg fell he sent his order to Boscawen that he was to detail that number of units with a proportion of frigates to winter and refit at Halifax, so as to be ready for action with the first breath of spring.[1] At all costs the French must not be suffered to recover any of the ground they had lost by getting reinforcements into the St. Lawrence before the attack

[1] Pitt to Admiralty, July 4, *S.P. Colonial* (*America and West Indies*), 76; Order to Boscawen, July 28, 1758; *ibid.*, Boscawen to Pitt, Sept. 13, *Chatham MSS.*, 78.

could begin; and accordingly, we have seen how Boscawen, when he went home, had left behind him the specified contingent under the command of his junior flag-officer, Commodore Philip Durell.

As for the army, the whole of it had remained in America, distributed in various garrisons from Louisbourg to New York; and Amherst had replaced the unfortunate Abercromby in supreme command. That was the reward of his success. But strangely enough Wolfe, the man to whom that success by universal agreement was mainly due, went home. Like every one else, he was pining to be on the Continent at the side of Prince Ferdinand and Frederick the Great, and Ligonier had apparently told him he would not be required to stay out after the campaign was over. There is reason to believe, however, that, young as he was—and he was only thirty-two—he had been already marked by Pitt for the command of the final effort. So soon as the fall of Louisbourg was known in London an order was sent to him to stay where he was, but it crossed him on the voyage, and the consequence was that when he reported himself at home he was received with something like a reprimand. "Since my arrival in town," he wrote to Pitt on November 22nd, "I have been told that your intentions were to have continued me upon the service in America. The condition of my health and other circumstances made me desire to return at the end of the campaign; and by what Lord Ligonier did me the honour to say, I understood it was to be so. General Amherst saw it in the same light. I take the freedom to acquaint you that I have no objection to serving in America, and particularly in the river St. Lawrence, if any operations are to be carried on there." It was undoubtedly his disgust that he had not been permitted to push on there after Louisbourg

fell that had been the root of the discontent that drove him home. But now "operations in the river St. Lawrence" were to be carried on, and carried on with the utmost force; and within a month—how soon is not known—Wolfe had been told he was to command.

Much has been written of Pitt's boldness in making the appointment; but by this time Wolfe's conduct at Rochefort and Louisbourg, his power of command and of discipline, his high accomplishments and scientific mastery of his profession no less than his originality of mind and initiative, had made him the pattern of soldiership for the best officers in the service. The American army had actually asked for him. There exists a curious paper sent home by three of the most capable and successful of the colonels who had mastered American warfare, Monckton, the Governor of Halifax, Murray of "Amherst's," and Burton of "Webb's." It must have left America as soon as Wolfe, for a copy was amongst the preparatory orders sent out to Amherst in December. After detailing a plan of attack by the St. Lawrence and the forces it would require, they recommend that as Amherst himself in virtue of his new appointment must remain on the Continent, Colonel Wolfe should have the command with the temporary rank of brigadier.[1]

The military command must indeed have been almost a foregone conclusion, provided the old King could be reconciled to so young an officer. With the appointment of an admiral it was much the same. Whatever Anson's private opinion of the two greatest names may have been at the moment, neither were available. Boscawen's success had been quite enough to give him a claim to a more lucrative and agreeable command. He had received with Amherst the thanks of the House

[1] *S.P. Colonial* (*America and West Indies*), 76, Dec. 29, 1758.

of Commons for his services, and his political influence was ample to ensure his legitimate claims being honoured. His reward was the Mediterranean in place of Osborne, who had been invalided home. As for Hawke he was ill ashore and would be wanted for the Channel. Both fleets demanded the highest talent at the disposal of the Admiralty, for on their containing power the whole of Pitt's system was built, and their junior flag appointments absorbed nearly all the men on whom any reliance could be placed. There remained, however, Anson's two favourite officers—Saunders, who had come home from the Mediterranean with the prizes which he and Osborne had taken from De la Clue off Cartagena; and Holmes, the hero of Emden. The moment Saunders had returned he had been called to take the place of Hawke, and since then he had been maintaining the blockade of Brest, at first under Anson, and then in command with Holmes in the second post. It was not till October 22nd that he came back to Spithead, and he was immediately summoned to town. He could not obey at once, for by an accident he had severely injured his leg; but as soon as he could move the thing seems to have been settled.[1] For it was upon Saunders that Anson pitched to command the main operation of the war with Durell in the second post, and Holmes in the third. Both of them had recently received their flag, and Saunders was specially promoted vice-admiral for the service.[2]

[1] *Admiralty Secretary, In-letters*, Oct. 22, 1758.

[2] Holmes, who after his promotion in August 1758 had been given the command at Portsmouth, was appointed about Dec. 16. On that day he wrote to Newcastle that he had suddenly been ordered to join Saunders. He believed it meant service with the "Western Squadron," and that he would lose the Jamaica station, which Newcastle had intended for him. He appears to have had no idea of the service upon which he was going. Durell was not informed till Dec. 29. See *Newcastle Papers*, 32,886.

The selection of this almost forgotten officer for so high a command is as striking as that of Wolfe, but it was made with as little hesitation. He was one of Anson's own men—one of the brilliant band who had been with him round the world. In Hawke's action off Finisterre in the late war he had more than justified his chief's opinion of him, and he had been sent out to the Mediterranean, it will be remembered, as part of "the little cargo of courage" that was to redeem Byng's disaster. It is a name that has never held the place in naval memory that it deserves. For apart from the high war services that he rendered, Saunders was second in the chain of our great naval First Lords, and as such he embodied the grand tradition which came down to him through Anson, and passed it on through Howe and St. Vincent to Nelson. As Saunders was the protégé of Anson, so Saunders was now fostering in his flagship the promise of Jervis. Of all the fine young officers the war was breeding, Jervis was the one in whom he displayed the warmest interest; and as Anson made Saunders, so did Saunders make St. Vincent.

In this case, as in so many others, the silence of the sea as strongly characteristic of Saunders as it was of his chief, denies us the advantage of knowing how he regarded the problem before him. There was no precedent for guidance. To carry an expedition hundreds of miles up a distant river, through a hostile country, against a fortress capital defended by regular troops, was an operation beyond all experience. And added to all this, the operation had to be conducted over an imperfectly commanded ocean, which the enemy's squadrons by luck and judgment were still traversing with impunity. The main problems, therefore, were how far the fleet must be devoted to its normal function and

concern itself with protecting passage and communication, and how far it would be able by direct action to give weight and momentum to the military force.

But if Saunders was taciturn Wolfe was not. He has let us know exactly how he regarded the naval aspect, and he made no secret that he regarded it with anxiety. In his belief the senior officers of the navy were as averse to these irregular combined expeditions as were their colleagues in the army, and especially averse to the St. Lawrence. He had, moreover, a particularly poor opinion of Durell, and trembled for the consequences if anything happened to Saunders. His impression was confirmed at this time by reports he received from two young officers in Louisbourg who had been nominated for the staff.[1] He sent their letters on to Pitt, and wrote: "They are a confirmation to me of the thorough aversion conceived by the marine of this country against navigating in the river St. Lawrence. . . . I will add from my own knowledge that the second naval officer in command there is vastly unequal to the weight of business; and it is of the first importance to the country that it doth not fall into such hands." There was no doubt some ground for both of Wolfe's opinions. The French had made the difficulties of the navigation of the St. Lawrence a legend which naval memory easily received. For in 1711, the only time we had attempted to enter the river with a regular force, the dangers of the navigation had defeated it at the cost of eight ships and nearly a thousand men. As for Durell, in the event he gave only too much ground for Wolfe's ill opinion, and it was just for Durell's part that he felt the keenest anxiety.

[1] Wolfe to Pitt, Dec. 24, 1758, enclosing Lieutenant Caldwell to Wolfe, Oct. 27, and Lieutenant Leslie to same, Oct. 30.—*Chatham Corr.*, vol. i. pp. 378–383. Both these officers were A.Q.M.G.'s at Quebec.

On receiving his appointment, Wolfe had drawn up a plan of operation with details of the force it would require, and Pitt had told him that so large a force could not possibly be spared. It was therefore of the utmost importance that the French should receive no reinforcements, and on Durell's fearlessness of ice and fog, and his readiness to face with the first breath of spring the exaggerated terrors of the St. Lawrence, depended their being kept out. In Wolfe's eyes, at least, there was but one way effectually to close the passage, and that was to sail boldly two hundred miles up the river to a point marked by the Isle of Bic, where the great estuary begins to narrow down to controllable dimensions. "A squadron of eight or ten sail," he wrote to Pitt, "stationed there in the earliest opening of the river, would effectually prevent all relief." The station had an additional advantage. For, as he continued, "it would be very easy for the remainder of the squadron to push a frigate or two and as many sloops up the river, even as high as the Isle of Orleans [that is, to the entrance of the Quebec basin], with proper people on board to acquire a certain knowledge of the navigation in readiness to pilot such men-of-war and transports as the commanders should think fit to send up after the junction of the whole fleet at Isle Bic." As for the dangers arising from our imperfect command of the sea, Wolfe made light of them. There was, of course, theoretically a chance of Durell's being caught in the river by a superior squadron from France, but Wolfe dismissed the risk as inconsiderable, for reasons which were thoroughly thought out. He argued that it was not likely the French could get a superior squadron together at all, and if they did, it was almost certain that, after a voyage from Europe to the St. Law-

rence at that time of the year, it would be in no case to fight Durell when it arrived. Finally, if by some remote chance a superior squadron did arrive, and arrived in a condition to fight, it would be useless for anything else after it had forced its way past him; and that would suit our purpose exactly. Assuming, on the other hand, that the French would not be able to pass our advanced squadron, he argued that his plan of pushing it boldly forward was equally sound. For in that case "a few ships-of-war and frigates would do to convoy the transports from the Isle Bic to Quebec, and to assist in the operations of the campaign." This would enable the bulk of the fleet to remain at Bic, ready to prevent any counter-stroke upon Louisbourg or Halifax, "whereas," as he pointed out, "if the whole went up to Quebec, intelligence would be long in getting to them," and they would be equally long in acting upon it.

Such was Wolfe's appreciation of the naval necessities of the operation. It was also, no doubt, Anson's view: for five days after Wolfe submitted his ideas to Pitt, that is, on December 29th, orders were sent to Durell to put the plan into execution.[1] Pitt seems to have shared Wolfe's anxiety about Durell, for ten days later he wrote a special letter on the subject to Saunders, enclosing Durell's orders, and adding, "You will take the earliest opportunity to renew the said orders in the strongest manner, as nothing can be so essential to the success of the important expedition against Quebec as effectually blocking up the river St. Lawrence as early in the year as shall be practicable." He was further instructed to detach not less than four ships of the line

[1] Doughty, *Siege of Quebec*, vol. vi. p. 108; *Chatham MSS.*, vol. 78; *S.P. Colonial (America and West Indies)*, 76.

under his command in time for them to reinforce Durell at Halifax by April.[1]

With the naval orders went instructions to Amherst, containing the whole plan of campaign. It was designed, as Pitt said, "to improve the great and important advantages gained in the last campaign, as well as to repair the disappointment at Ticonderoga," and so deal a final blow at the French position in Canada. The great attack was to be delivered, as we know, on two lines of operations, one by land and one by sea, and it has often been debated which of the two Pitt regarded as the principal one. The tenour of the instructions he drew up leaves little doubt. They begin by telling Amherst he is to detach certain named units from his command (which Wolfe presumably had asked for), to the number of 12,000 men, and to have them at Louisbourg fully equipped for Wolfe's command by April. To carry them thither, 20,000 tons of transport would be sent from England. He was also to provide a thousand militia to assist in garrisoning Louisbourg. More than half the despatch in which this plan of campaign is unfolded is taken up with detailed instructions for the preparation of Wolfe's force. It is not till all this has been fully gone into that Amherst is informed as to what he is to do with the troops he has left. Pitt introduced the subject with a kind of apology for not giving him the Quebec command. "I now come," he wrote, "to that part of the operations for the ensuing campaign in North America which are to be under your immediate direction, and which for their importance, difficulty, and extent, as much as from the correspondence and intercourse that they will constantly demand with the several governors throughout the whole of North

[1] Doughty, vol. vi. p. 94, Jan. 9, 1759; *Chatham MSS.* 78.

America must necessarily require the presence of the officer . . . vested with the command in chief of the King's forces there by his commission under the great seal." After this preface, he is told that the duty assigned to him was an irruption into Canada with such part of the King's troops as he should think proper, "not allotted as above for the expedition against Quebec," supported by a large body of the forces of the Northern provinces. It was left to his judgment to make the irruption by one line or two. He might advance either by Crown Point, that is, on the line of Lakes George and Champlain; or by La Galette, that is, down the St. Lawrence; or he might proceed by both. If practicable, he was to attack Montreal or Quebec, or each in succession. He was also to endeavour to re-establish the old inland naval base at Oswego on Lake Ontario, and capture the French base at Niagara, "so as to establish the uninterrupted dominion of that lake, and at the same time effectually cut off the communication between Canada and the French settlements to the south."

Such instructions can have left little doubt in Amherst's mind that he was to play second fiddle, and that his operations were regarded as the support for Wolfe's movement rather than as the main attack. Whatever may have been his opinion of the arrangement, he behaved with conspicuous loyalty. All the high talent for administration which he possessed he devoted heart and soul to the preparation of Wolfe's force, and no expedition had ever been better equipped than that which Wolfe eventually found at his disposal. Large quantities of ordnance and other stores were also sent out from England with the empty transports, and the whole sailed from Spithead on February 14th under Holmes, with an escort of six of the line and nine frigates. So powerful a convoy was a

departure from what had been the recent practice, but the ships of the line were those which Saunders had been told to send forward to reinforce Durell; and, besides, the activity of the French at Toulon was causing the Government some uneasiness. Saunders, with Wolfe in his flagship, was on the point of sailing with the rest of his fleet, being ten of the line, three bomb-vessels, three fire-ships, and a sloop or two, when an order reached him that as he passed down the coast of Spain he was secretly to detach two "sixties" to reinforce Boscawen in the Mediterranean. One of the ships named was the *Stirling Castle*, but on her he had set his heart. So he told Pitt he should keep her and detach a "seventy-four" instead, as, though small, "she was very handy for rivers."[1]

She was in fact the vessel that he was to honour with his flag before Quebec, and this is the first intimation we have of what was in his mind. The indication is that he did not consider his function would be fulfilled by merely covering the army and preserving control of its communications. It suggests an intention of making at least an endeavour to add the weight of his squadron to Wolfe's attack. But as yet he had not uttered a word.

Though the voyage was long and Wolfe and he made it as shipmates on the best of terms, the general, up to the last moment, had been unable to penetrate his colleague's reserve. "The admiral," wrote Wolfe, after they had been nearly three months together and were about to enter the St. Lawrence, "commander-in-chief of the fleet, is a zealous, brave officer. I don't exactly know what disposition he intends to make in the river . . . but I conclude he will send four or five of his smallest

[1] *Townshend's Journal*, Doughty, vol. v. p. 225; Saunders to Pitt, Feb. 13, *S.P. Colonial* (*America and West Indies*), 88.

ships of the line to assist us at Quebec, and remain with the rest at an anchor below the Isle of Coudres, ready to fight whatever fleet the enemy may send to disturb us." [1]

April 20th was the date fixed for the concentration of the whole of the forces at Louisbourg, but so tedious was the voyage that it was not till ten days later that Saunders even sighted Cape Breton. Then it was only to find that the winter had been one of unprecedented severity, and that the ice still made it impossible to approach the coast. For more than a week the admiral persisted in trying to find a way through, and then on the last day of April bore away for Halifax.[2] There, to their dismay, they found Durell still at anchor. His squadron had been ready for sea for over a month, but there he was waiting till he heard the ice would permit him to enter the Gulf of St. Lawrence.[3] It was just for this kind of half-hearted way of doing things that Holmes had been reprimanded by Pitt when he had been ordered to blockade the Friesland rivers in the previous winter. For Durell to wait till he knew the ice was clear was to wait till the expected French ships were clear in. His proper place was cruising off the ice and waiting for his chance. Saunders, who from his own observation had reason to believe the passage into the Gulf though not into Louisbourg was already practicable, immediately ordered him to sea, with strict injunctions "to watch for the first opening of the river St. Lawrence so as to push with his squadron as high as the Isle of Bic, and from thence to detach some small ships to the Basin of Quebec," if he could. Even then Durell demanded three

[1] Wright's *Life*, p. 498. The letter was written to his uncle, Major Walter Wolfe.
[2] *Townshend's Journal*, Doughty, vol. v. p. 229.
[3] Durell's despatch, March 19, *Admiralty Secretary*, *In-letters*, 481.

hundred troops to complete his crews. Wolfe promptly gave them, and was careful to send with them his favourite officer, Colonel Carleton, whom, after a prolonged struggle with the King, he had got appointed quartermaster-general. Owing to foul winds it was not till May 5th that Durell got clear away, and, as Wolfe lamented, there was reason to believe some French storeships were already before him.[1]

Wolfe's anxiety now became acute. On May 7th the whole expedition should have left Louisbourg. It was the 13th before they could even leave Halifax, and the end of the month before the concentration of the various contingents at Louisbourg was complete. On his voyage out Wolfe had already heard that in consequence of Pitt's anxiety to get hold of St. Lucia there was little hope of his being joined by the troops that were to have come on from Barrington; but he was not prepared to find that when all his promised American units were together he had not quite three-fourths of the twelve thousand men that Pitt had promised. The only consolation was his splendid siege-train and his staff. As compensation for the smallness of his force, Pitt had given him carte-blanche to appoint his officers. All but one were his own special men. Monckton was his senior brigadier and second in command; Murray was his junior brigadier, but the second brigade was given to Colonel George Townshend, the heir of that famous political house. During the late war he had acquired some reputation as a promising soldier, and had been aide-de-camp to the Duke of Cumberland. Since then he had seen no service; for, having quarrelled with the Duke, he sent in his papers and took to politics. It

[1] Wolfe to Major W. Wolfe, May 19, Wright's *Life*, p. 498; same to Amherst, May 1, Doughty, vol. vi. p. 52.

was he who had introduced the Militia Bill, and the manner in which he carried it through the intense opposition it excited, and afterwards put it in force in his own county in the teeth of his family, had highly commended him to Pitt. At the fall of the Duke after Klosterzeven he had been reinstated in his rank and made aide-de-camp to the King. Thereupon, in testimony of his appreciation of Pitt, he had volunteered to serve in one of his much-ridiculed expeditions, and this appointment was the result. Though a man of undoubted ability and born to command, he was of a difficult temperament, and, to judge by the freedom and shallowness with which he criticised the leadership of both Cumberland and Wolfe, it was clear he was afflicted with an overweening sense of his powers. For such a man to serve under Wolfe was, as things went then, something of a condescension, and though he was far from being the kind of brigadier Wolfe would naturally have chosen, he welcomed the appointment as giving distinction to his command.[1]

With the exception of Wolfe and Townshend, all the general officers were under thirty. It was a boys' campaign, and in spite of every disappointment the force sailed from Louisbourg on June 1st in the highest spirits. Wolfe alone continued to be anxious. So soon as they were clear of Louisbourg the admiral announced his intention of sending home despatches. Still harping on his main preoccupation, Wolfe begged him to wait till they heard what Durell had done. On that, he seems to have felt, hung the decision as to whether his operation could be a real attack or only a diversion in Amherst's favour. But the admiral, having probably Anson's orders in the matter,

[1] Wolfe to Townshend, Jan. 6, Townshend's *Military Life of Marquess Townshend*, p. 143.

would not wait. So the despatches went home without telling whether the first and most important point had been won or lost.[1]

So vital seemed the success of Durell that a week before the fleet sailed for Louisbourg a further contingent of troops and two more of the line had been sent on to strengthen his hand. Saunders indeed had divided his fleet into two equal portions, one of which was with Durell to secure a hold on the river, while with the other he himself escorted the great convoy.[2]

For nearly three weeks longer their anxiety continued. So bad were the fogs that it was a week before they could enter the Gulf, and ten days more before they reached the Isle of Bic. Durell was not there. Instead of his squadron was a single frigate, and it brought the news they feared. Durell had found no ice in the Gulf, and had reached Bic four weeks before without difficulty. On his way he had captured a storeship from St. Domingo, and at Bic a sloop from Quebec. From this prize he learnt that only a few days before he entered the river three frigates and a score or so of storeships from France had got in untouched.[3] It was a terrible blow. But for Durell it must be said that, like Holmes under similar circumstances, he had done his best to retrieve the situ-

[1] Wolfe to Pitt, June 6.

[2] Saunders had under his command, after reinforcing Boscawen, twenty-two of the line. With him were: *Neptune* (flag), 90; *Royal William*, 84; *Dublin* (Holmes's flag), 74; *Northumberland*, 70; *Shrewsbury*, 74; *Orford*, 66; *Prince Frederick*, 64; *Bedford*, 64; *Medway*, 60. Frigates, 4; fireships, 3; bomb-ketches, 3; sloops, 3. Transports, ordnance vessels, and victuallers, 119. Refitting at Louisbourg, *Terrible*, 74; *Somerset*, 64. Not yet arrived from Europe, *Trident*, 64.

Durell's squadron: *Princess Amelia* (flag), 80; *Vanguard*, *Captain*, and *Devonshire*, 70's; *Pembroke* and *Prince of Orange*, 60's; *Centurion* and *Sutherland*, 50's; and about half-a-dozen frigates.

All told, the fleet can have consisted of little less than 170 sail.

[3] Gibson to Lawrence, Doughty, vol. v. p. 61.

ation. Instead of sitting still where he was and sending a few light ships forward, he had boldly pushed on in pursuit with his whole squadron as high as the Isle of Coudres, about a hundred miles further up the river, and only sixty-five miles from Quebec. Carleton immediately occupied the island with his troops, but the chase was well away. At this point the real difficulties of the navigation began. Twenty miles beyond it were the famous "Traverses," which the Canadians believed no ship could pass without a local pilot, and ships of the line hardly at all. But Durell in his eagerness to retrieve his error did not rest even there. Though a bomb battery had been begun to bar the way it had not yet been armed, and after he had been some ten days at Coudres he pushed on three ships of the line and a frigate as far as the Isle of Orléans at the entrance of the Quebec basin. Carleton, leaving a small garrison at Coudres, went on with the bulk of the troops, while Durell set to work to survey and buoy the channel till his chief arrived. It was a fine piece of work and must go far to redeem his previous want of enterprise, though what he had lost could never be recovered.[1]

The news which had met Saunders at Bic was even worse than he knew. The first French ship to arrive was a frigate from Brest bringing M. de Bougainville, Montcalm's most trusted staff-officer. Young as he was, it had been decided at the end of the last campaign to send him home to represent to the French Government the desperate state of the colony, and to importune them for what was regarded as indispensable for its preservation. On neither side was there a more brilliant person-

[1] Foligné's *Relation du Siége*, Doughty, vol. v. p. 306. The writer says the advanced ships anchored off Orléans on June 5, "après avoir très bien fait la Traverse," *ibid.*, vol. iv. p. 169. Gibson to Lawrence, *ibid.*, vol. v. p. 63.

ality. Born and bred in the law, he was destined to die an admiral with the reputation of one of the greatest of the French navigators. In boyhood he had developed a genius for mathematics, and by the time he was twenty-two had written a treatise on integral calculus which won him the fellowship of our own Royal Society. Abandoning the law, he had become a secretary of embassy in London when Mirepoix was ambassador, and was still on terms of intimacy with British officers serving in America.[1] When in 1755 Mirepoix had asked for his passports on the outbreak of hostilities, Bougainville had returned with him to Paris. Diplomacy was yielding the field to arms, and Bougainville, moving with the times, entered the army. The following year Montcalm made him his aide-de-camp, and as we have seen the two heroes of the Canadian resistance had run the British blockade together out of Brest.

The mission with which he returned to France after his first campaign was one of no little difficulty, and neither he nor his chiefs were under any illusion as to what they had to expect. Even if sufficient men could be spared to place the Canadian army on something like an equality with that of Amherst, they knew the British had too strong a control of the common communications for the reinforcement to be practicable. "It is evident, then," wrote Bougainville in his minute, "that the Government must for the present treat Canada like a sick man to be kept alive with cordials. . . . If we can survive this year's crisis . . . we are justified in hoping the country will be saved for good." In the eyes of the Marquis de Vaudreuil, the governor, and his military advisers it was in short a clear case for the stronger form of war, for standing on the defensive in America till French successes in Europe should change things for the better. So all

[1] See Abercromby to Bougainville, Sept. 1759, Doughty, vol. iv. p. 120.

they asked was for a supply of victuals and munition, a few drafts and officers, and five ships of the line under privateer captains, which could be sunk to bar the way to Quebec, and whose crews could go forward to keep the command of Lake Ontario.

In recommending this attitude of defence the essential offensive element was not forgotten. Vaudreuil and Montcalm were not above taking a leaf from Pitt's book, and strongly recommended raids upon the coasts of Virginia and Carolina by way of diversion, to relieve the pressure upon the Canadian frontiers. In Montcalm's eyes, indeed, this was the only way in which Canada could be saved. "Without the unexpected blessing," he wrote to Marshal Belleisle, "of a great diversion by sea against the English Colonies, or of great mistakes by the enemy, Canada will be taken this campaign." But, as he had too much reason to believe, it was an idea the French court could not entertain, and Belleisle least of all. The Marshal had secretly in hand, as we shall see, a more drastic method of counter-stroke, which would require all the naval strength which France could muster, and all the energy of her Admiralty. So Canada had to be left to its own resources, and such relief as the privateers of Bordeaux and Dunkirk could be induced to take out. Vaudreuil was told the King relied confidently on him to keep at least a footing in Canada, even if he had to concentrate his forces within the narrowest limits, "since the conditions of peace would be very different if the King's forces were still maintaining themselves in a part of the country, however small."[1]

[1] For an excellent account of Bougainville's mission, see Waddington, *Guerre de Sept Ans*, vol. iii. pp. 252 *et seq.* The idea of diversion by counter-stroke on Virginia and Carolina should be compared with our own strategy in 1812.

With this poor result of his mission Bougainville had to be content. Some three hundred recruits, a few engineers and gunners, a score or so of storeships and four frigates, commanded by privateersmen, from Brest, Rochefort, and Bordeaux, were all he could come by. All got through with the exception of two storeships, which were captured in the Gulf by the two ships that had been sent after Durell and joined him at Coudres. To Canada, sunk in despair and on the brink of starvation, this succour, slender as it was, came like new life. Three days after Bougainville's arrival, fifteen of the storeships appeared under convoy of a single frigate, and shortly afterwards, two more frigates from Brest and an ordnance vessel from Rochefort.

But these inadequate supplies were far from being all that Durell's neglect enabled Bougainville to bring. The information he carried was most important of all. So secret had been the British designs, and so impassable did the French regard the St. Lawrence, that until he reached Montreal there had been no suspicion of what was in the wind. Vaudreuil, with both Montcalm and the Chevalier de Lévis, his second in command, were at Montreal, busy organising resistance to Amherst on the lines of Champlain and of Niagara. Not one of them expected any serious attack up the St. Lawrence, and practically nothing had been done to construct works for the defence of the river below Quebec. Montcalm, it is true, was uneasy, and as a matter of principle would have made some provision for the safety of the capital. "To Quebec," he wrote, "the enemy can come if we have no fleet, and Quebec taken, the colony is lost. Still no precaution. . . . I have offered to arrange matters there . . . the answer is, we shall have time."[1] It was

[1] Montcalm to Belleisle, April 12, 1759, Waddington, vol. iii. p. 264.

Bougainville who shattered this fool's paradise. For he brought with him a copy of an intercepted letter from Amherst, which disclosed the whole British plan of campaign, as well as full information of the formidable preparations that were being made for the attack by sea. But for his timely arrival, Quebec might possibly have been taken by a *coup de main*. And here lies the moral of Durell's delay. It was not till May 10th that Bougainville reached Quebec, and for eighteen days he had been locked in the ice in the entrance of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. He must actually have been there while Saunders was trying to find a way into Louisbourg. The transports can hardly have been far away, and had Durell but hardened his heart to cruise off the ice by the first week in April, when his squadron was ready, it would have scarcely been possible for anything to have got into the Gulf. "Had we but sailed," wrote one of Durell's officers to Governor Lawrence at Halifax, "at the time you so earnestly wished, we had most certainly intercepted them, as they were not more than ten days ahead of us."[1] So near was Canada to being left to famine and to ignorance of the real attack! But now the splendid chance for which Pitt had worked so well was gone. The moment Montcalm heard Bougainville's news, he flew with him to Quebec, and so had just time before Wolfe appeared to make those masterly dispositions which rendered it impossible for the British general to execute the plan he had settled for the attack.[2]

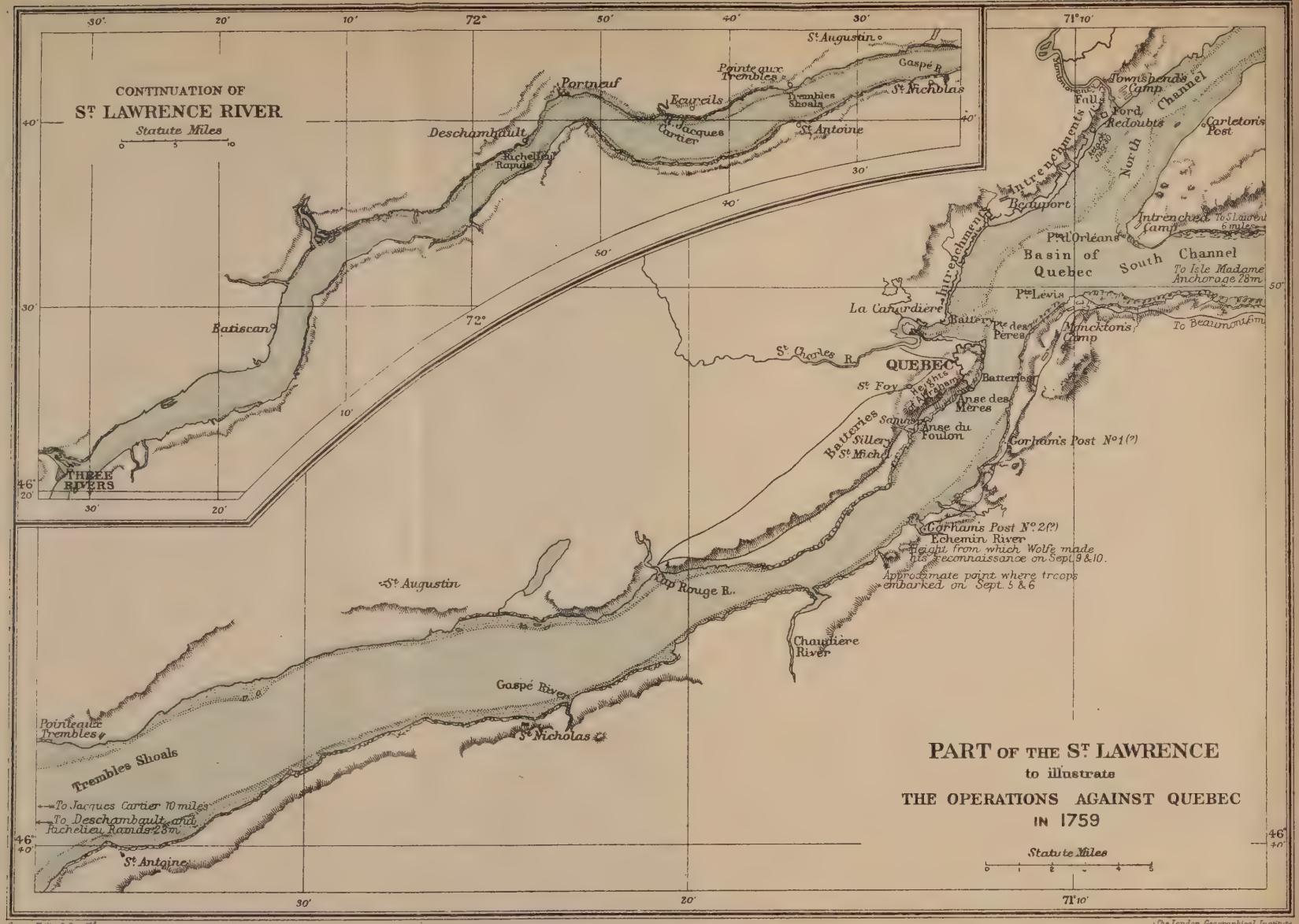
Of the actual military situation, however, beyond the fact that Montcalm was in command, nothing was known

[1] Doughty, vol. v. p. 62.

[2] *Journal de Foligné*, Doughty, vol. iv. p. 165; *Journal de Johannés*, *ibid.*, p. 220. Foligné was a naval officer. Johannés was "Major de Quebec." See also Waddington, vol. iii. pp. 260 *et seq.*

in the British flagship. Not a word had come down from Carleton, and Wolfe decided to go up immediately in the frigate which had brought the unwelcome news. The worst he had anticipated had happened; but, on the other hand, he now knew he was to have a powerful support on which he had not counted. It came from Saunders. What Wolfe had expected from him we know—a few light ships to assist in the siege, while the admiral and the bulk of the fleet covered the army in a position in which they could also prevent a counter-stroke on Louisbourg and Halifax. If this had ever been the admiral's idea of the function of his fleet, he had thrown it to the winds in face of his colleague's difficulties. Louisbourg and Halifax must trust to their own strength, the quickness of his cruisers, and the vigilance of the covering fleets of Hawke and Boscawen. He had come to take Quebec. It was not even enough for him that half his force was already up the river. Next day he made the signal for the transports and their guide-frigates to proceed, and then with his whole battle squadron he followed in the rear. Saunders, as he was to prove once more before the year was out, was a man who could not hold off when fighting was in the wind. So away he went to share at first hand all Wolfe's anxieties and danger, and all the bitterness of failure, if failure it was to be.

Then followed the feat that struck a chill into the hearts of the Canadians—and a great feat it was, though British skippers chose to say it was not near so bad as getting up to Blackwall. Never before had a battle fleet been taken up the St. Lawrence; yet, in spite of fogs and adverse winds, it was done without a single mishap. Divided into three squadrons, each led by a frigate, the vast throng of transports made their way, score after score,



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in perfect order. In three days they were at Coudres, where they found Durell with pilots and mark-boats ready for the dreaded Traverse passage. Leaving him in command of the heavy ships, Saunders shifted his flag to the *Stirling Castle*, and with three other light ships of the line, passed on to see the passage accomplished. Mark-boats were placed on either side of the tortuous channel, and every transport was provided with a French pilot, of whom Durell had entrapped a number by sailing in under French colours. But the old transport skippers mocked at such precautions, and from their forecastles, speaking-trumpet in hand, they calmly piloted their way by the look of the water. By June 26th the last transport had passed the Traverse, and on the morrow Wolfe seized the Island of Orléans.

No sooner was the army encamped than he proceeded to the western end of the island to reconnoitre, and then for the first time he knew his plan was impossible. Quebec stands on a lofty and precipitous promontory, which marks the confluence of the St. Charles River with the St. Lawrence, and is known as Cape Diamond. The meeting of the two rivers gives the rocky peninsula a triangular shape, and it was Wolfe's intention to invest it by drawing his army as it were across the base of the triangle, with his right on the St. Lawrence and his left on the St. Charles. By adopting this method, his slender force would suffice, with the assistance of the ships in the river, to make the investment complete. Immediately below the city, that is, between Cape Diamond and the Island of Orléans, the St. Lawrence opens out into a broad basin, the northern shore of which, known as the Côte de Beauport, rises inland with a steepish slope, stretching from the St. Charles to the river Montmorenci about eight miles lower down. It was on this

Beauport shore that Sir William Phipps had landed with a small Colonial expedition in October 1690 when Frontenac was governor. It was a bold attempt to surprise the capital after Nova Scotia had been reduced, but it was made far too late in the year and Phipps had to retire when the first blow failed.[1] Still the memory survived; and it was here Wolfe too had intended to land, with the idea of pushing his way across the St. Charles River and round the back of the city till he reached the St. Lawrence again, and so secured the position he had in mind. "I reckon," he wrote, "we shall have a smart action at the passage of the river St. Charles, unless we can steal a detachment up the river St. Lawrence and land them three, four, or five miles or more above the town, and get time to entrench so strongly that they won't care to attack." His communication with the fleet was to be maintained by a series of strong entrenched posts and redoubts, extending from the St. Charles to Beauport village. He also intended to establish entrenched posts along the south shore opposite the city.[2]

One glance from his point of vantage upon Orléans Island was enough to show Wolfe that he was completely frustrated, and was face to face with a situation on which he had never counted. Montcalm had at his disposal an army which, though of very poor quality except for five weak battalions of the line and one or two of Colonial infantry, numbered about 12,000 to Wolfe's 8000. Under these circumstances the French had decided not to trust to the very inadequate defences of Quebec, but to

[1] See the relations of Phipps and Major Savage in the *Colonial Calendar* (*America and West Indies*), 1689–92, pp. 385 and 415. In the United Service Institution is a French plan showing the British landing between Beauport and the Duck Decoy (Canardière), which is about a mile from Quebec.

[2] Wolfe to Major W. Wolfe, May 19,—Wright, p. 498.

use the far more formidable device of covering the place with a field army entrenched in a practically impregnable position. To all appearance, before the defences of Quebec could even be approached, that army must be defeated, for in the short time which Montcalm had been given by Bougainville's timely warning, he had stretched a formidable line of entrenchments from the St. Charles to the Montmorenci, barring all access to the city from the Beauport shore. The position was not his own choice. It had been forced upon him by Vaudreuil. Montcalm would have entrenched his army upon the plateau behind the town—the immortal Plains of Abraham—and made the St. Charles his line of defence, thus occupying the ground which Wolfe had marked for himself. At most, he would have extended his position as far as the village of Beauport, where a small stream intersects the Côte some five miles short of the Montmorenci, so as just to cover the section which Phipps had chosen for his attack. But Vaudreuil would have his way, and so Wolfe found it settled.[1]

Another point of importance which the reconnaissance established was that there were no ships in the basin. Three or four days after the French convoy had anchored before Quebec the appearance of Durell's squadron at Bic had been reported, and Vaudreuil, just arrived from Montreal, gave orders, without even attempting to unload the victuallers, for the frigates and the whole convoy to go on to Batiscan, a point some sixty or seventy miles further up the river. There they were to remain with their three frigates as a magazine for supplying Quebec and Montcalm's army with victuals and ammunition "beyond the reach of fires in the town and the insults of the enemy." Some twenty-five miles below them, at

[1] Waddington, vol. iii. p. 274.

the Richelieu Rapids, the two royal frigates were stationed. But in none of the vessels were left more than a few men as a guard. The rest of the crews, numbering fifty officers and twelve hundred seamen, were brought down by land to man the batteries and gunboats of Quebec.[1]

There had been, it is true, a moment when there was an idea of turning the ships to better use. So soon as it was known that Durell had appeared in the river, a joint council of war decided to sink eight of them in the Traverse. Before, however, the order was executed, an officer was sent to examine the channel. He quickly returned with the staggering information that the local pilots had completely deceived them. The channel was four times as wide as they believed, and eight ships would scarcely be enough to form even a serious obstruction.[2] The rapidity of Durell's advance had prevented any other steps being taken, and so in the end everything hung on the invulnerability of the position which Wolfe had seen.

Meanwhile the British fleet was in no little trouble. During Wolfe's absence a severe squall had swept down upon it out of the north-east. Where it lay, off St. Laurent, on the south side of the Island of Orléans, the anchorage was bad and exposed, and in a few minutes everything was in confusion. Anchors were dragging right and left, and cables being slipped or cut, and before the squall passed a good deal of damage had been done. Several transports were driven ashore, and a large number of small craft and flat boats destroyed. Clearly it was no place for the fleet to remain, and Saunders had already been feeling for a berth that was better and nearer to the

[1] *Vaudreuil's Report*, Doughty, vol. v. p. 358; *Journal de Foligné*, ibid., vol. iv. p. 170.
[2] *Journal de Foligné*, June 2, Doughty, vol. iv. p. 167.

coming work. He had found it at the head of what was known as the South Channel of Orléans. This was the reach between the west end of the island and the mainland, where the river, as it leaves the lake-like basin of Quebec, narrows down again, and, making a bend at right angles to the true course, flows in a southerly direction to pass round Orléans Island. The anchorage on which Saunders had set his heart was under the two points of land which formed the actual outlet from the basin. On the island side was Point d'Orléans, and on the other Point Lévis, where the mainland was shaped into a blunted promontory by the southerly bend of the river. Together the two points formed as it were a gate to the basin, which, if held in force by the enemy, would bar access to the city and render the chosen anchorages impossible. So far as could be seen, the French had done nothing to secure it. Point d'Orléans was certainly clear, but Saunders, who had pushed up with two of the line and a frigate to reconnoitre further, thought he detected indications that the enemy was at work on Point Lévis.[1] He promptly let Wolfe know, and begged him to nip the movement in the bud. Wolfe, after his manner subordinating everything to the paramount importance of doing what Saunders wanted, instantly detached Monckton for the purpose with his whole brigade, but until the work was completed the fleet had to stay where it was.

It was just as well that it did. A serious objection to the new anchorage was that it was badly exposed to an attack by fireships. It was perfectly well known to the British that the French intended such an attempt, and that they attached great importance to it. Saunders, however, appears to have had little anxiety and to have

[1] "Journal Abrégé," Doughty, vol. v. p. 285. This journal is attributed to Marcel, one of Montcalm's aides-de-camp.

relied confidently on his picket-boats as a complete defence. The French preparations were of the most elaborate and costly description. No less than seven fireships were equipped, at a cost of over a million francs. The highest hopes were placed upon them; but whatever chance they had of success was thrown away by the French themselves. Instead of waiting till Saunders had placed his fleet comfortably for them in the head of the South Channel, they determined to strike at him at once and where he was. The very night after the landing the attempt was made. But the distance was far too great, and the navigation too difficult and tortuous. Long before the leading captain was anywhere near the British anchorage he lost his head and fired his ship. It was the prearranged signal for the rest to do the same. The result was of course that the picket-boats had plenty of time to tackle the blazing vessels as they liked, and to tow them ashore wherever it was handiest. And not a stick of the fleet was touched.

On the following day, in high spirits at the failure of the French attempt, Monckton with four battalions passed over the South Channel to the village of Beaumont, which lay immediately opposite Wolfe's headquarters at St. Laurent. The movement was quite out of sight of Quebec, and on the morrow, being the last day of June, he was able to seize Point Lévis almost without a blow. There he proceeded to entrench himself with the assistance of Saunders's marines. Next day Townshend's brigade moved from the camp at St. Laurent and occupied Point d'Orléans opposite Monckton. The rest of the force followed during the next days, and a strong entrenchment to secure the position was commenced. At the same time Saunders moved up the fleet into the anchorage between the two points.

Thus by July 1st Saunders and Wolfe had the problem and all the factors for its solution fairly before them. It was a case of the superior force assuming a rigid defensive—under very correct conditions. The object of the campaign for the French was negative—to prevent the occupation of Quebec, and theoretically, therefore, it was to be obtained by a purely defensive attitude towards Saunders and Wolfe. This view of the case of course ignored the advance of Amherst. Should he succeed in breaking through the barriers that had been prepared for him the situation would change, and a passive defensive would no longer suffice. The correct strategy—the true defence—would then be to strike boldly at Wolfe's force before Amherst could join hands with him. But seeing how ill adapted for counter-attack was Montcalm's motley army, he was probably right to reject that form of war until the approach of Amherst forced his hand. So long, therefore, as Amherst was outside the theatre of operations the object of the French could be won by simply maintaining the defensive. Theoretically there is no military situation more difficult than one where the stronger force is able to attain its object by adopting the stronger form of war. For the weaker force to attack under such circumstances is merely to play the enemy's game, and yet it is only by assuming the offensive that the weaker can achieve its object. There are two ways out of the dilemma. One is to induce the enemy to abandon his defensive attitude and assume the weaker form of war in attacking you: the other is to bewilder and confuse him, so as to give you a chance of effecting a superior local and temporary concentration which will enable you to seize a vital part of his position, and force him to attack you there. Shortly it comes to this—that by hook or by crook you must snatch from him the advantage of

defence. Such a method of proceeding requires, of course, the highest foresight, resource, and daring—indeed all the finest qualities a leader can possess. At the same time there is no force so well adapted for the work as one that is amphibious, not only in composition but also in unity of purpose and harmony of spirit between admiral and general. Such fortunately—perhaps in the highest degree on record—was the British force which sat astride the entrance of the basin of Quebec eyeing its prey.

Unhappily nothing remains to show us the inmost minds of Saunders and Wolfe. To fathom their views of solving the problem we can do no more than follow carefully what they did.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE CAPTURE OF QUEBEC

THE first step that was taken, after the situation with which Montcalm had met the advance was fully appreciated, was to increase the naval force at the front. On June 28th, the day after the landing, Saunders sent down to Durell for Holmes to come up with four more of the line and the whole of the marines.[1] On July 2nd, the day after Saunders occupied the entrance to the Quebec basin, Wolfe, under a strong escort of Monckton's brigade, made a reconnaissance two miles westward of Point Lévis to a place known as Point des Pères, immediately opposite Quebec, where the river is less than a mile broad.[2] The reconnaissance satisfied him that the town could be bombarded from this point, and in the following days both fleet and army were busy landing siege-guns and mortars, and pushing them forward to the camp at Point Lévis. On July 4th Brigadier-General Murray made a reconnaissance in force still further up the river, to examine the shore above the town. "Upon his return,"

[1] James Gibson to Governor Lawrence, Doughty, vol. v. p. 64. Internal evidence shows that Gibson was an officer or volunteer in the *Vanguard*. He sailed with Durell's advanced squadron from Halifax, and also with Holmes when Saunders sent for him. The *Vanguard* and *Captain* were the only ships of Durell's squadron that sailed with Holmes, but Gibson does not mention any of the operations of the *Captain*, in which ship Holmes's flag was flying.

[2] *Journal of Particular Transactions*, Doughty, vol. v. p. 168, from *Notes and Queries*. It is by some one in "Fraser's Regiment," which formed part of the escort.

says the journal of Major Moncrieff, one of the chief engineer officers, "there was a plan fixed for landing there, and some rafts for ferrying the troops across the river were ordered to be made at Point Lévis."[1] The place where the rafts were begun was in direct view of the French, and, as we shall see, there is little doubt the threatened operation was designed from the first as a feint. Next day Colonel Burton of "Webb's" was ordered to seize the ground at Point des Pères. When this had been done, Wolfe and Saunders spent some time there together reconnoitring.[2] What passed between them is not known, but that night Wolfe ordered the erection of siege batteries at the new post. By this time all the rest of the army was established at Point d'Orléans, and Colonel Carleton had occupied a minor post upon the North Channel of Orléans, opposite the outfall of the Montmorenci, the extreme left of Montcalm's position.

At first sight it will appear that Wolfe was recklessly splitting up his slender force. It was certainly the impression he hoped to produce. While threatening Montcalm's position from end to end he was tempting him to attack, confident that the fleet held his scattered units together closely enough to crush any force the French could get across the river. The temptation to Montcalm was emphasised by the threat to bombard the town, and the popular pressure thus brought to bear on the French general was more than he could resist. There was a riot in the town. Maddened at the prospect of a bombardment, the Quebec militia tumultuously clamoured to be led against the British works on Point Lévis. For a time they were calmed, but according to

[1] *Journal of Particular Transactions*, Doughty, vol. v. p. 38.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 169.

some accounts it was only at the cost of sanctioning an attempt on the Orléans position. Before the British appeared, Montcalm is said to have been in favour of occupying Point Lévis in force. He was now against it; and believed that a blow at Orléans was the lesser evil, since the British works there were not so far advanced as those at Point Lévis. The compromise, it seems, was accepted, and a large force actually prepared for the attempt, but either from fear of a counter-attack upon Beauport or from bad weather, the execution of the project was postponed till the favourable moment had passed, and the Orléans force was also too well established to be attacked with any prospect of success.

Wolfe's first disposition to entice Montcalm to attack him failed therefore to achieve its object, and without delay he began to develop a new method of dislodging his wary enemy. It was one which had recommended itself to him from the first, and remained his favourite till the very last. What Montcalm had regarded as the defect of the French position appeared so also to Wolfe. Montcalm, it will be remembered, was against stretching the Beauport position as far as the Montmorenci. Wolfe saw that by seizing the heights on the eastern side of that river above the famous Montmorenci Falls he would be able to dominate Montcalm's left, and threaten it so dangerously that he believed it must force the French to attack and try to dislodge him. To this end, so soon as the Point d'Orléans was thoroughly fortified, he intended to throw that half of his force suddenly across the St. Lawrence and establish it at the falls of the Montmorenci. He would thus be separating still more widely the two halves of his army; but this he probably regarded as an advantage, since it would be a stronger temptation for the enemy to attack, and every precaution was taken

to make of the fleet as perfect a bridge as possible between the two wings.

It was in view of this operation that Saunders finally settled the distribution of the fleet. From what occurred subsequently, there is reason to believe that when he and Wolfe were together at Point des Pères the general was consulting him as to the possibility of passing ships up above Quebec, and that Saunders was of opinion that it could not be done till siege batteries had been established to keep under the fire of the town. In any case, seeing how narrow was the river at this point, and how completely commanded by the French guns, it was a desperate venture. Still, that Saunders meant to try it when his condition was fulfilled there is little doubt. Indeed it may well have been with this in his mind that he had sent for Holmes. In any case, if a daring operation of the kind had to be done, Holmes was certainly the man to do it. With Holmes's squadron, Saunders would have eleven of the line, or just half his battle fleet, as the advanced division under his own hand, and the whole of the marines in line with the army. Durell had command of the rest. With nine of the line, including all the three-decked ships, he was to take station in the Isle Madame anchorage at the east or lower end of the Orléans Island and just above the Traverse, and two of them were to be stationed between him and Cape Tourment, where the main channel leaves the north bank, and has to make an awkward "traverse" to the south. The two remaining ships of the line kept guard at Coudres, and none of the battle squadron were below this point. Of the cruisers, Saunders had also about half. Of the rest, six were distributed at various points of the river between Durell and the Isle de Bic, while four were out scouring the Gulf and keeping touch with Louisbourg and the

American ports. In this way the flow of supplies from Boston and New York was kept open, and the line of retreat secured.[1]

Meanwhile his light craft had plenty of work preparing for the coming movement. On the left of the Lévis position, the parties working at the siege batteries opposite the town had to be kept free from annoyance from the French gunboats and floating batteries, and on the right was the important work of surveying the North Channel between Orléans and the Montmorenci.

It was on the result of this survey that the possibility of Wolfe's intended stroke mainly depended. For it was an integral part of the plan that the ships should take up a position which would enable him to drive the enemy from the works on their extreme left. It was the universal belief, however, that the North Channel was only navigable for boats. With the experience the admiral had recently gained, this did not satisfy him. A boat was sent out to try to take soundings. She was quickly seen and driven off by Indians, who sallied from the Montmorenci in canoes. But it was not before it had been ascertained that here also the local pilots were wrong, and next day the Canadians had another shock. "About noon," wrote a French naval officer, "a frigate and a sloop at dead low water passed into the Montmorenci channel, and anchored at St. Anne [really Ange Gardien] without any difficulty. Yet the Canadian pilots have never dared to make such an attempt since the foundation of the

[1] *An Account and Authentic Journal . . . by a Gentleman in an Eminent Station on the Spot*, London, 1759, s.d. July 8; see Doughty, vol. iv. p. 233. The author is clearly a naval officer, probably in the *Lowestoft* (28). On July 7 he enters: "Our barge sounding . . . was taken." Knox says this boat was "the barge of the *Lowestoft*" (vol. i. p. 345). See also "Disposition of the Ships, &c.," signed by Saunders, Doughty, vol. vi. p. 118; also Gibson to Lawrence, *ibid.*, vol. v. p. 61; and Captain Calcraft's letter, *ibid.*, vol. vi. p. 142.

colony, fearing the reefs which they now see cleared with matchless ease." [1]

It was Jervis who performed the feat in the *Porcupine*, of fourteen guns, of which Saunders had just given him the command. He quickly made the advanced position of the French untenable, and under cover of his two little vessels that night, Wolfe slipped across with Townshend's brigade from Orléans and seized the coveted position again almost without a blow. The operation had also been covered by a march up stream from Lévis, and by false information conveyed, it would seem, purposely to the enemy by a deserter. His story was that that night three separate attacks were to be made in force upon the French position; one at Montmorenci, one at Beauport, and the third upon the lower town by a mixed force of troops and sailors, under cover of a bombardment by the fleet.[2] Strong colour was given to the story by the arrival of Holmes and his squadron, and Montcalm had thus been induced to regard the preparatory operations of Jervis off Montmorenci as a feint.

Holmes had come up with his flag in the *Captain*, a sixty-four. Foul winds had kept him back for more than a week, but once arrived he became exceedingly active after his kind. While Wolfe and Townshend were securing their position at the Montmorenci Falls, he stood in with two or three frigates as close as the water would allow, and engaged the enemy's entrenchments, which he could just reach. Till ten o'clock at night he held his ground, but at last, when the French got a thirteen-inch mortar into play, he was compelled to sheer off. In doing so he ran on a reef, but got off again unhurt.[3]

[1] *Journal de Foligné*, Doughty, vol. iv. p. 176.
[2] *Journal de Foligné*, July 8.
[3] *Journal of Captain Montrésor*, Doughty, vol. iv. p. 312. *Cf.* The Naval Officers' Journal, *ibid.*, p. 284.

For the next few days these operations continued and caused increasing unrest in the French camp. Had any one but Montcalm been in command there is little doubt Wolfe's strategy would have succeeded in entrapping the enemy into the offensive. Continued pressure was brought to bear upon the French headquarters by the distracted townsfolk. Vaudreuil was vehemently urged to take advantage of the division of the British army and order an attack in force upon Monckton's half-finished batteries at Point des Pères. At the same time the Chevalier de Lévis, who commanded the French left towards the Montmorenci, was urging Montcalm to dislodge Wolfe from his new position. But Montcalm kept his head. "Drive them thence," he is reported to have said, "and they will give us more trouble. So long as they stay there they cannot hurt us. Let them amuse themselves." The attempt on Monckton's position at Lévis he could not stop, ill-advised as he thought it. With Vaudreuil's sanction, three days after the Montmorenci position had been seized, some fifteen hundred militia stiffened with a few regulars crossed to the south bank above the town. M. Dumas, Major-General of the Colonial Forces, who had hitherto commanded the right or Quebec wing of the Beauport position, was in command. The movement did not escape Wolfe's vigilance. He proceeded at once in person to Lévis with considerable reinforcements, thus demonstrating how closely the water knit his scattered force together. Everything was ready to bring off the kind of coup he was working for, but unhappily Dumas's force never appeared. It was in two columns, and before the leading one reached the British entrenchments it was seized with panic. In falling back precipitately it was mistaken by the second column for the enemy, and fired upon. Some loss was incurred before the mistake was

discovered, and the whole affair concluded in a stampede for the boats.

To the British staff the fiasco was a serious disappointment; they felt themselves undeservedly robbed of a fairly earned chance of dealing the enemy a heavy blow. The disappointment was all the greater because the move against Montmorenci was proving something like a deadlock. Montcalm would not attack, and though Wolfe could make the extreme French left untenable with his guns, he found it impossible to deliver an attack upon it across the Montmorenci River. Fortunately the situation was soon relieved. On the night of July 12th the townsfolk of Quebec, sunk in depression at the double failure of the fireships and the land attack on Lévis, saw two rockets go up from Saunders's flagship. What they dreaded had come. The British batteries were finished, and it was the signal to unmask. The bombardment began, and quickly proved that it was going to be effective.

For Saunders it was enough. The first night that tide and wind should serve, he was resolved the desperate attempt to pass above the town should be made. Upon Rous, the old privateersman, now captain of the fifty-gun ship *Sutherland*, the honour of leading the attempt fell. He was to be accompanied by the *Diana* (32), Captain Schomberg, and the *Squirrel* (20), Captain George Hamilton. Three transports with three companies of grenadiers and a battalion of the Royal Americans under Carleton, and two armed sloops, completed the squadron. On the 16th, the third night after the bombardment had begun, the attempt was to be made, a fact which leaves little doubt that the bombardment was all that Saunders had been waiting for.[1] The night proved un-

[1] *Journal of Particular Transactions*, Doughty, vol. v. p. 171; *Montrésor's Journal*, ibid., vol. iv. p. 322.

favourable, and it was not till the 18th that the conditions served. That day the general came over to Lévis from Montmorenci, which was then his headquarters, leaving strict injunctions with Townshend that he was to keep quiet. Wolfe spent the morning in reconnoitring the town above Monckton's batteries. In the afternoon he sent an officer, Major Dalling, three miles up, "in order to look for places most convenient for the troops to ascend at the landing on the north shore. He found "two or three," one of which must have been the famous Anse du Foulon, where the landing was eventually made.[1]

At ten o'clock at night Wolfe took up a position to witness the attempt. Under cover of a storm of fire from Monckton's batteries the ships began stealthily to move. So still and ghostlike did they glide before the wind upon the fast-flowing tide that for some time they were not noticed from the Quebec side. The French were completely unprepared for so daring a move, and even when the ships were seen the fire against them was feeble, and under the rain of British shells very ill directed. Steadily the dim sails moved on till they were out of sight and the French fire ceased. It was soon known that only three shot had struck. They had passed at the cost of a few splinters—all, that is, save the *Diana*, who had taken the ground off the point. She was got off in spite of the French fire in the morning, but was so badly injured she had to be sent back to Boston to be docked.

"On the 18th at night," wrote Saunders in his despatch to Pitt, "they all got up except the *Diana* and gave General Wolfe an opportunity of reconnoitring above the town, these ships having carried some troops with them for that purpose." That is all the silent sailor had to

[1] *Journal of Particular Transactions*, Doughty, vol. v. p. 172.

say. Yet the feat was without precedent, and so far beyond expectation that it struck the Canadians with a sense of impotence, as of an irresistible fate grinding in upon them. "The English are too cunning for us," wrote a Quebec curé. "And, who could have suspected it?—part of their fleet passed all of our batteries, and is now riding in safety above the capital. . . . There is but one place where we can with safety pay adoration to our most gracious, but now wrathful and displeased God, who we fear hath forsaken us." For the British it had done no less than change the whole situation. The deadlock was broken, and a new field was open for operations to shake Montcalm's inflexible attitude.

To all appearance it was now conceivable that the position he had occupied to cover Quebec could be turned, and that he could be cut off from the storeships above from which he was receiving his supplies. Wolfe immediately went to work. The day after the gauntlet had been run he was aboard Rous's ship reconnoitring the north shore. His observations seem to have convinced him an attack might be made. Next day, in company with Holmes, he renewed his reconnaissance,[1] and seems still to have been minded to establish a footing on the north bank. Orders were sent down to Townshend at Montmorenci for nine companies of grenadiers, all his howitzers, and some guns. They were to be passed over to Orléans or Lévis at the dead of night. "By General Wolfe's desire," wrote Saunders in conveying the order to Townshend, "I have sent you three longboats for the hautbitzers great and small, and the royal mortars. I shall soon send for cannon, as the General designs to make his attack above the town."[2] The grenadiers

[1] Doughty, vol. iv. p. 285.
[2] *Townshend Papers*, Doughty, vol. v. pp. 194, 250, 273.

actually crossed. The artillery were embarked, and the bulk of the troops on the south side, together with 1400 seamen and marines, were under orders to march that night with two days' provisions.[1] Three hours later the whole movement was countermanded. Such indecision was ill received in both services. "The General," wrote Townshend, "seemed to be at a stand which place to make his attack." "Within the space of five hours," wrote an officer in the *Vanguard*, "we received at the General's request three different orders of consequence which were contradicted immediately after their reception . . . to the no small amazement of every one who has taken the liberty of thinking. . . . I am told he asks no one's opinion."[2]

That Wolfe really intended to make an attack above, though not at the Anse du Foulon, as many supposed, there can be as little doubt as of the reasons which caused him to abandon the intention. What he clearly had in his mind was a landing between Quebec and Cap Rouge, a place about nine miles up, where the first tributary above the town flows into the St. Lawrence. At best it was a thorny operation. He found the enemy alert and the difficulties very great, "arising," as he explained to Pitt in his official despatch, "from the nature of the ground and the obstacles to our communication with the fleet. But what I feared most," he

[1] Knox, vol. i. p. 341.

[2] Gibson to Governor Lawrence, Doughty, vol. v. p. 65. Holmes has a similar remark. In a letter he wrote home on Sept. 18, after the final attack had succeeded, he says: "It [the Anse du Foulon] had been proposed to him a month before when the first ships passed the town, and when it was entirely defenceless; but Montmorenci was his favourite, and he rejected it. He now laid hold of it when it was highly improbable he should succeed," &c. This would suggest that Holmes considered he was the original proposer of the Foulon plan. He may, however, be referring to Major Dalling's reconnaissance of the 18th. See above, p. 433.

added, "was that if we should land between the town and the river Cap Rouge, the body first landed could not be reinforced before they were attacked by the enemy's whole army." In other words, he would surrender to Montcalm the advantage of interior lines. So long as the units of his force were not too widely scattered, the fleet secured him that advantage owing to the rapidity and secrecy of water transit. But with the Quebec batteries interposed it was a different thing, and he could not rely on the fleet for preserving the potential unity of his force. "Notwithstanding these difficulties," he explained to Pitt, "I thought once of attempting it at St. Michael's, about three miles above the town; but perceiving that the enemy, jealous of the design, were preparing against it, and had actually brought artillery and a mortar (which, being so near Quebec, they could increase as they pleased) to play upon the shipping . . . it seemed so hazardous that I thought it best to desist." The place which Wolfe calls St. Michael was just above Sillery, at which post had been established the battery of which he spoke.

Upon Montcalm the passing of the ships and the movements that followed made no more impression than did Wolfe's first attempt to disturb him. To erect the little battery at Sillery and another at Samos, near the Anse du Foulon, and to detach Dumas with a small corps of observation above the town, was all the notice which the wary general permitted to be taken of the new situation. Deep as was the disappointment at Wolfe's apparently facile abandonment of a move from which so much was expected, this impassive attitude of Montcalm is his real defence. If Wolfe thought the idea impracticable at that stage of the proceedings, Montcalm was entirely of his opinion. The battery at Sillery had forced the British

ships to move up to Cap Rouge, out of touch with the Lévis position. By breaking the paths up the cliffs and obstructing them with abattis, Montcalm believed he had rendered a night attack impossible; while if anything were attempted by day, Dumas would see it in plenty of time. "Be sure," he wrote to Bougainville, who, in spite of his bare four years' service had succeeded Dumas in command of the right of the Beauport position, "that Wolfe's intention is only to give us some uneasiness about our right and our left in order to displace us, and then strike between Beauport and the St. Charles."[1] This idea that Wolfe sooner or later would attack in the old place and make a dash at his centre—the only part of the position which had not been threatened—Montcalm held as obstinately as did Wolfe the idea of forcing his left. It was, of course, the one scheme that Wolfe had never yet entertained for a moment, and never did entertain until the very end, as a counsel of despair, when nothing else seemed possible; and even then it was executed in a way his adversary had ceased to expect. The power of confusing that lies in amphibious operations—their power of baffling the astutest military reasoning—could want no better illustration.

In the supposition that Wolfe would merely use the new advantage which the passage of the ships gave him to create uneasiness on the French right, Montcalm was correct. So soon as the idea of an attack in force above the town was abandoned, Wolfe ordered Carleton to make a raid on Point aux Trembles, a place nearly twenty miles higher up the river, where the women of Quebec had sought refuge from the bombardment, and large quantities of property were stored. Wolfe's object, as he told Pitt, was "to divide the enemy's force, and to draw

[1] Doughty, vol. iv. p. 10.

their attention as high up the river as possible, and to procure some intelligence." Carleton duly carried out his orders; made the raid with little loss, and returned with a number of important prisoners; but on Montcalm the stroke had no effect whatever.

So far, then, Wolfe's ingenuity had failed. Neither the division of his force nor the threat upon the French communications had availed to loosen Montcalm's grip. It was clear something more drastic must be done, and two days after Carleton's return, that is, on July 23rd, a full council of war was held in Saunders's flagship. Nothing could be more eloquent of the tension of affairs. So far as we know, it was the first that had been summoned. That Wolfe was above taking any one's advice was untrue, but at Rochefort he had seen enough of councils of war to last him his life. Whether it was demanded by Saunders or suggested by Wolfe we cannot tell. All we know is, that when Wolfe's indecision was at its height, and his self-confidence rudely shaken, it was held.[1] The minutes have not survived. We only know what followed the deliberations. Wolfe, with Murray, went to Montmorenci, where he ordered the position to be strengthened, and began making reconnaissances in force up the stream to try to find some place where it could be crossed. Saunders ordered another frigate and a sloop to join Rous above the town, and directed Holmes to go up and take command of the whole. The third step was of a different order. It was, indeed, one of the most obnoxious that a general can take in war. Still, cruel and detestable as it was, it remained a recognised form of war—the last argument of the sword. The inflexible attitude of Montcalm was forcing the British commanders to the extreme resources of their craft, and

[1] *Townshend's Diary*, Doughty, vol. v. p. 251.

recognising that the moment had come, neither Saunders nor Wolfe permitted themselves to shrink from their use. The information which had been obtained went to show that the Canadian militia were in a state of sullen discontent. Disgusted at the inactivity of the regular troops, they were fretting to get in their harvest. On his first arrival, Wolfe had issued a proclamation offering the colonists immunity for person and property if they held aloof from his contest with the King of France's army. The proclamation had had no effect, and the moment seemed come to make them feel what their refusal meant. It was therefore decided that Wolfe should issue a second proclamation, declaring that unless by August 10th the colonists accepted his previous offer of neutrality, he would lay the whole country waste and make prisoners of every one he caught.[1]

Taking the three resolutions together, it is clear that Wolfe was still of his original opinion—for loosening Montcalm's position by every means available, and then forcing his left. His search for practicable fords above the falls proved fruitless, but a tidal ford below them was found. Here, however, on the edge of the hard ground, the French had erected a redoubt to bar the passage. To Wolfe this work seemed to offer the objective he wanted, for, so far as he could see, it was not commanded by the entrenchments on the crest above. If, therefore, he could seize it, Montcalm would be forced to attack him, and so a general action would be brought on. By combining an attack across the tidal ford with a boat attack from Lévis and Orléans, there was no reason why the redoubt should not be taken. The weak point lay in the fact that it was a movement in which the fleet could give little help, for at low tide, when alone the ford was passable, the shoals

[1] Doughty, vol. ii. p. 123. The proclamation was dated July 25.

would not permit of the ships getting in close enough to prepare the position for the attack. Saunders did his best by arming two light-draft transports as floating batteries, but his preparations were delayed for a day or two, owing to a desperate last effort of the French to destroy his fleet. On July 28th, the night before the attack was to have been made, they sent down a vast engine, consisting of about a hundred *radeaux* or lumber rafts fastened together and laden with combustibles. But again the vigilance of the picket-boats prevented its doing any harm. It was fearlessly grappled and towed ashore, and was as complete a failure as the fireships which had greeted the arrival of the fleet.

It was on the last day of July the attack was eventually made. The transports that had been prepared as floating batteries were run inshore till they took the ground, while in the *Centurion*, Saunders himself took up a station in the North Channel, and got in an effective fire. The troops from Orléans Island and Lévis were early afloat, but spent the morning hovering off Phipps's landing-place between the St. Charles River and Beauport. This, it will be remembered, was where Montcalm expected all along the real attempt would be made. It was there he had concentrated his regular troops, leaving to the militia the defence of the left, which was Wolfe's real objective. Wolfe's intention, of course, was to hold Montcalm and his regulars where they were, and to hurl his own seasoned men on the militia before they could be supported. It was a well-designed effort to get every advantage out of his amphibious mobility, and it only failed by accident.

So soon as the tide had fallen enough for the Montmorenci division to pass the ford, the troops in the boats made a dash to the right for their appointed landing-

place. As ill-luck would have it, a hidden reef checked their advance, and a long delay ensued before a way through could be found. Meanwhile Wolfe had discovered that he had miscalculated the position of the French redoubt. The French engineers had not made the mistake on which his plan was founded. He could see as he drew near that it was commanded by the entrenchments, and that they too must be carried before it could be held. Every chance was now against him. His real objective was declared. Montcalm in person was hurrying with his regulars to the threatened point, and the Montmorenci force was thrown out of time. Most men would probably have ordered a retirement, but Wolfe persevered. For all his science, the moral force in warfare was always for him the master element. "The desire," he afterwards wrote to Pitt, "to act in conformity with the King's intentions induced me to make this trial, persuaded that a victorious army finds no difficulties." We can hear the echo of Rochefort in his words. There he had learnt "that nothing is to be reckoned an obstacle to your undertaking which is not found to be really so upon trial"; that the want of enterprise ruins troops; and that a general should at least attempt what he has been sent to do. So he let the attack go on, and even then it might have succeeded but for the exuberant dash of his troops on which he was counting. So eager were they, now that the leash was at last loosened, that the grenadiers, the moment they landed, without waiting for their supports or even to form, made a wild dash at the entrenchments above them. But Montcalm was ready for it, and after a most desperate struggle they were flung back by a fire there was no facing. Before a new attempt could be organised, a storm of rain burst upon them, which made further operations impossible; and as the night was

falling, Wolfe had to recall them, with nothing but a loss of some eight hundred of his best troops for his pains.

The failure in no way shook Wolfe's faith in the soundness of his scheme. Its only effect was to determine him to increase the pressure above the town, and then to try again. The advantage of the proposed diversion up the river was emphasised by Holmes coming down to report that the French were sending detachments across to the south side. At the same time a fresh convoy with stores and provisions arrived, bringing news that reinforcements from the West Indies would probably soon arrive, and, what was better still, a report that Amherst had occupied Ticonderoga. Bourlamaque, who was in command there, had indeed, according to his orders, evacuated the place on Amherst's approach, and had fallen back to the end of Lake Champlain for a final stand. It was an excellent move which sealed the fate of Amherst's campaign; but for the force at Quebec it only raised new hopes that they would not have to perform their task single-handed.

To Wolfe's proposal for increasing the force above the city Saunders readily consented, and the new plan of action was promptly set on foot by the admiral and Murray, who was to command the troops. As the wind continued to blow obstinately down the river, it was impossible at present for any more ships to pass the batteries, but on the night of August 5th Saunders sent up twenty large flat-bottomed boats, which passed undetected. At the same time Murray marched up from Lévis with one battalion, two hundred marines, and detachments of light infantry and rangers, which brought his force up to twelve hundred men. Near to the Echemin River, about six miles above the batteries, an

outpost known as "Gorham's Post" had been established, which was clear of the Sillery Battery, and here the troops were embarked in the boats, and carried up to join the ships.[1]

Holmes had resumed command of the flotilla. The orders which Saunders gave him were to act in concert with Murray, and lend him all the assistance the ships and boats could afford. "At the same time," he says, "I directed Admiral Holmes to use his best endeavours to get at and destroy the enemy's ships above the town; and to that purpose I ordered the *Lowestoft* and *Hunter* sloop, with two armed sloops and two cats with provisions to pass Quebec and join the *Sutherland*, but the wind holding westerly, it was August 27th [that is, more than three weeks later] before they got up."[2]

In view of the preparations which Wolfe was making to lay the country waste and prevent the Canadian harvest being gathered, the ships on which Saunders had set his heart were, failing the defeat of Montcalm's army, the key of the situation. They still lay seventy miles up the river at Batiscan where they had been sent at the first appearance of the British expedition. The idea of getting them beyond the Richelieu Rapids, it will be recalled, was to place the supplies they brought out of reach of fires in the town, and "the insults of the enemy to which they would have been exposed elsewhere."[3] The base of supply was thus made secure, but everything had to be brought down by river, and the line of supply was in

[1] This was Gorham's second post. His first post had been almost opposite Anse du Foulon, but had been moved forward apparently when the batteries at Sillery and Samos were established.

[2] Saunders to the Secretary of the Admiralty, Sept. 5, Doughty, vol. vi. p. 113.

[3] Vaudreuil's Report, Doughty, vol. v. p. 358.

proportion long and weak. Vaudreuil, in ordering his ships so high up the river, had not counted on his batteries at Quebec being passed so easily. A little below the storeships were the three privateer frigates which had brought them out, and below them again were the two royal frigates which had come out separately. The crews, as we know, were now manning the Quebec batteries and gunboats. It is one of the enigmas of Wolfe's strategy that he seems to have attached so little importance to trying to break or at least to threaten this line. Murray ever since his first reconnaissance had been bent upon it, and Saunders seems to have regarded the idea with equal favour.

Now that the movement was made and the line of supply actually threatened, it had an immediate effect upon Montcalm. It was still far from shaking his heroic tenacity, but it so far alarmed him that he sent Bougainville with considerable reinforcements to take command of the whole line from Quebec as high as Trois Rivières, the point which Amherst would naturally strike in advancing from Lake Champlain. It was a distance of about a hundred miles—far too great for the troops at Bougainville's disposal to cover. For the moment, however, the acute danger only extended for some thirty-five miles above Quebec to a place called Ecureils, where the Jacques Cartier River comes in. Above this the navigation becomes exceedingly difficult for laden ships without local pilots, while about fifteen miles further on the Richelieu Rapids render it practically impossible. The whole of this fifty miles was, however, a real anxiety, and the way Bougainville protected it with a few hundred militia and a handful of mounted infantry was one of the most brilliant features in the campaign.

In the midst of the preparations to meet the coming blow, news reached the French camp that redoubled their anxiety and still further reduced the possibility of increasing Bougainville's force. Bourlamaque had sent word of his retreat, and the despatch was immediately followed by the startling intelligence that Amherst had detached a force under General Prideaux, and seized Niagara before it could be reinforced. Thus on all three lines of operation Canada was now open, and Vaudreuil and Montcalm could see nothing for it but to hurry off the Chevalier de Lévis as secretly as possible to Montreal with nearly a thousand men. Nor was this all. The very night this serious reduction of Montcalm's army had to be made, a terrible disaster befell Quebec. Since the arrival of the last convoy the British batteries had been given unlimited credit in ammunition, and so hot grew the fire that a conflagration broke out in the lower town, which it was impossible to extinguish, and it was reduced to a heap of ashes.

A day or two later, on August 8th, the first blow from Holmes and Murray fell. The place selected was again Point aux Trembles, about ten miles below Jacques Cartier, and twenty-five above Quebec. The attempt was made at low tide, and it was only after much trouble with the rocks that the advance-guard landed. It formed at once upon the beach, but, as in Wolfe's last attack, the supports were so badly entangled in the reefs that Murray found it necessary to recall the whole force after receiving some loss. In an hour or two, when the tide had made, the attack was renewed; but at the first alarm Bougainville was at the point of danger. He could be seen riding from point to point, and the whole place seemed lined with men. Still the advanced boats went on till they were received with so hot a fire that it was im-

possible to proceed, and Murray again sounded a retreat. The result was the loss of over eighty killed and wounded of Murray's force, and a considerable increase of spirits in the French camp.[1] Still, as Murray was only charged with a diversion, he was quite correct in drawing off so soon as he saw he had attracted a considerable body of the enemy. The check, however, was unexpected, and the force needed a rest to recover from the shock. Murray therefore determined to seize a position at St. Antoine on the south shore, opposite Point aux Trembles. Here he formed an entrenched camp as a base for further operations, and in accordance with Wolfe's proclamation began ravaging the surrounding country.

Next day the British cruisers below Quebec that were waiting to get up nearly succeeded, though the wind dropped at the critical moment and only one small schooner was able to join Holmes. The effect of these movements, however, was to cause considerable uneasiness at the French headquarters. Vaudreuil further reinforced Bougainville and urged him to cross the river at Jacques Cartier with eight hundred men and dislodge Murray from St. Antoine. Bougainville very properly refused, for reasons that were unanswerable. The commissariat consequently grew more and more anxious. Not only did Murray's proceedings look like all the south shore being lost to Quebec as a source of supply, but the stores from the ships at Batiscan could no longer get further than Jacques Cartier by boat, and the land transport was wholly inadequate. Even the boats had to be escorted by infantry marching along the north bank, and this and the victualling of the posts which Bougainville had

[1] The best account of these operations is in the *Journal of Particular Transactions*, Doughty, vol. v. p. 177 *et seq.* The author took part in them. See also *Major Moncrieff's Journal*, ibid., pp. 45 *et seq.*

established all along the line made a heavy strain on the commissariat.

But worse was yet to come. For five days Murray and Bougainville continued watching each other across the river. On the sixth night all was as usual in the British camp. Tents were standing and fires burning as before. Nor was there any sign of action except a movement amongst the ships which seemed to indicate another attack on Point aux Trembles. It proved, however, to be a mere demonstration. But while Bougainville was watching the ships and camp there came the staggering news that Murray and his force had appeared at Deschambault, twenty miles above, at the foot of the Richelieu Rapids, and were burning the magazines that had been established there.

It was only too true. Murray and Holmes had learnt from their prisoners the existence of the magazines, and in the night of August 16th had slipped the whole of their troops into the boats. Two hundred marines alone were left in the camp with orders to keep the tents standing and light the usual fires, while the ships were directed to make a feint against Trembles in the morning. Then, stealing up on the flowing tide, Murray reached Portneuf just after daylight. There they landed, and marched about five miles further on to their objective. There was no opposition. The surprise was complete, and, after destroying the whole of the stores, the troops returned the same evening to their boats without the loss of a man. The exploit was all the more inspiriting because it was performed in presence of the French frigates which lay some three miles above. Having nothing but guard crews left in them, they could not move to interrupt the proceedings, and the bluejackets finished the evening by forcing the crew of a commissariat

brigantine to burn her under the nose of the King's officers. At the same time a number of sheep were embarked and a hundred head of cattle destroyed.[1]

Such a blow to the line of communication was too sharp to be ignored, even by Montcalm. At last he was goaded into action. Bougainville, with his mounted infantry and all the troops he could collect, had hurried up the river so soon as the alarm had reached him. It was not till the 20th that an orderly brought Montcalm the startling news, and he hurried off on the spot to take command in person, with all the grenadiers that were not already above the town and every picket he could snatch up. But all was over long before either he or his lieutenant could arrive; and meanwhile the Beauport position was without a general and the flower of its troops. Bougainville, Lévis, Montcalm—all three had been thrust up the river by sheer force of strategical pressure.[2]

Curiously enough, it was at this moment Wolfe was fretting to deliver a new attack. By August 15th he had formed a fresh plan and had communicated it to Townshend.[3] Its nature is not known, but from what occurred subsequently the probability is it was some scheme for getting at the rear of Montcalm's position. At all events it involved the return of Murray's force, and Wolfe, who had not intended him to make so prolonged an operation, began to grow impatient. "I wish we had Murray's corps back," he wrote to Brigadier Monckton on August 19th, "that we might be ready to

[1] *Major Moncrieff's Journal*, Doughty, vol. v. p. 46, and *Vaudreuil's Report*, ibid., p. 359. Vaudreuil says the vessel destroyed was "la goëlette *La Manette*" of 100 tons, "employée au transport des vivres de differents endroits de la Colonie au camp de Beauport." See also *Journal of Particular Transactions*, ibid., vol. v. p. 181.

[2] *Journal abréyé par M.* [*Marcel*], *aide-de-camp de M. le Marquis de Montcalm*, Doughty, vol. v. p. 293; *Foligné's Journal*, ibid., vol. iv. p. 197.

[3] *Townshend's Diary*, Aug. 15, *ibid.*, p. 258.

decide it with them." And again, three days later: "Murray, by his long stay above and by detaining all our boats, is actually master of the operations—or rather puts an entire stop to them. I have writ twice to recall him."[1] The fact was that at this time communication with Murray was entirely cut off. The French armed boats just above the town commanded the river, since the wind still made it impossible for more cruisers to get up and deal with them. Reinforcements which had been sent up by the south shore on the 16th had failed to cross the Echemin River, and Wolfe could think of nothing better than to order rockets to be sent up from Gorham's post. "This," wrote Barré, his adjutant-general and acting chief of the staff, for Wolfe himself had fallen ill, "will be a hint to the people above that we want something."[2]

Meanwhile the people above were devoting themselves to completing their instructions, and were by no means inclined to return. For, besides their other reasons for elation, they too had learned for certain that both Ticonderoga and Niagara were in Amherst's hands, and that he might at any time appear at Trois Rivières. Murray was keen to open communications with him; Holmes was equally eager to carry out Saunders's orders about the destruction of the ships. The two birds could be killed with one stone, and it was decided to try. After the raid they had fallen down again to their camp at St. Antoine, and there they must have been arriving when, about midnight on the 30th, Montcalm reached Point aux Trembles. Here another orderly from Bougainville stopped his further progress with news that all was over, and that he himself was returning the weary seven

[1] Doughty, vol. vi. p. 68 (*Galway Papers*).
[2] Barré to Monckton, Aug. 24, Doughty, vol. vi. p. 69.

leagues he had had to cover. Next day, as preliminary to the new movement, Holmes went up the river again in a schooner to see if he could find a channel for his ships, and to reconnoitre his objective. His efforts were unavailing. The next night he returned to report that the difficulties of the navigation made the project impracticable. Regretfully all idea of destroying the ships had to be abandoned, and on the morrow Murray began to march his troops down the river again, burning and ravaging as he went.

In that the detachment had not got at the French ships, and, so far as we can tell, had not attracted a greater force than its own, it must be accounted to that extent a strategical failure. But it was far from barren. Its confusing effect at headquarters was serious, for not only did it finally confirm Montcalm in his belief that no genuine attack would be made above the town, but it entirely dislocated his line of supply. So critical indeed was the outlook for the army at Quebec that a desperate resolve was taken to man the frigates at Batiscan and stake everything on an action with Holmes's squadron. The batteries were consequently stripped of their seamen gunners. It was calculated they could reach Batiscan by the 28th, and attack the British by the end of the month. It was also decided to reinforce Bougainville with three companies of grenadiers and other picked troops, so long as the British held St. Antoine.[1]

In the interval Wolfe, impatient to put his new plan into action and refusing to admit that he was ill, had been getting rapidly worse. He was now entirely confined to his room with fever. Yet on the 24th he issued orders for the force he required to be ready to embark on the morrow. Whatever his intention was, it was not

[1] Vaudreuil to Bougainville, Aug. 25, Doughty, vol. iv. p. 68.

carried out. The arrival of Holmes and Murray with the bulk of the troops may have altered the general's plans. Their report of the possibilities above may have affected him. At any rate, he certainly abandoned his projected operations below. On the morrow orders were given for the troops that were still with the ships above to hold on to St. Antoine, and another battalion and all the light infantry were moved from Montmorenci to Lévis.[1] Wolfe at the time seemed to be getting better, but he quickly had a relapse, which quite prostrated him. It was presumably in consequence of this serious state of affairs that on the 27th the brigadiers met at Monckton's quarters on Point Lévis, and then went aboard the admiral.[2] What passed at the conference is not recorded. The French had a story, obtained from a deserter, that about this time Saunders went to Wolfe and told him something definite must be done, as the season for naval operations was fast running out. It is quite possible he did. All, however, that is known for certain is that on the morrow Wolfe authorised the brigadiers to hold a council of war to determine what was to be done. For their guidance he wrote down what his own views were, and requested them to consult together before they went on board the flagship for the formal council.[3] This document still exists, and shows beyond dispute that Wolfe had still no belief in operating above the town. He gave three alternative

[1] *Journal of Particular Transactions*, Doughty, vol. v. p. 183.

[2] "Aug. 27. . . . Generals Townshend and Murray left the Montmorenci camp in the morning and went to Point Lévis, when General Monckton accompanied them aboard the admiral."—*Townshend's Diary*, Doughty, vol. v. p. 261.

[3] Barré to Monckton, Doughty, vol. vi. p. 69; Monckton to Townshend, Aug. 28, *ibid.*, vol. v. p. 274. The French were informed by a deserter that this step was taken by Wolfe in consequence of a formal representation from Saunders that for naval considerations something must be done quickly.

methods of attacking Montcalm where he lay, and nothing else. Firstly, there was a possibility of getting a force in his rear, by crossing the Montmorenci eight or nine miles up. Secondly, the Montmorenci force might cross the tidal ford at night, and strike directly at Beauport village, the centre of the French position. In each of these cases the enemy was to be held for the turning movement by a frontal attack in force from the boats. Thirdly, he suggested a frontal attack on Beauport from the water by the picked troops of the army, prepared by a feint across the ford an hour earlier.

Next day, in accordance with Wolfe's direction, the three brigadiers met at Lévis, and in the afternoon again went on board the admiral and submitted to him a new plan of operations which they had drawn up.[1] In this document they summarily rejected all Wolfe's plans. They plainly expressed the opinion that the whole idea of attacking the Beauport position was unsound, because, apart from the extreme difficulty of the operation, such an attack, even if successful, would mean that the St. Charles River position would remain to be carried; whereas if they could once establish themselves on the north shore above the town, "of which," they wrote, "there is very little doubt, then M. de Montcalm must fight us upon our own terms. We are between him and his provisions, and betwixt him and the French army opposing General Amherst. If he gives us battle, and we defeat him, Quebec must be ours, and what is more, all Canada must submit to his Majesty's arms, a different case from any

[1] "Answer of the Brigadiers," Wright, p. 545, which begins, "Having met this day," &c., and is dated Sept. 29. See also *Townshend's Diary*, Doughty, vol. v. p. 261. "Aug. 29. . . . The three brigadiers left Point Lévis in the afternoon and went on board the admiral. At night General Monckton went to Point Lévis again. Generals Townshend and Murray stayed on board ship all night."

advantage we can hope for at Beauport." Further, they pointed out, if Montcalm passed the St. Charles in great enough strength to prevent the landing above, Wolfe's third plan, a direct blow at Beauport, could be executed with more ease and probability of success.[1]

The idea of shifting the line of operations above the town was plausible enough, and it appears to have met with the entire approval of Saunders and Holmes. Next morning Monckton returned to the flagship, and after a detailed plan of operation had been worked out, the two junior brigadiers carried it to Wolfe at Montmorenci. The plan, as formulated, involved the complete abandonment of his cherished position at Montmorenci. Yet Wolfe at once acquiesced, though he was quite unconvinced. "My ill state of health," he wrote to Saunders, "hinders me from executing my own plan. It is of too desperate a nature to order others to execute."[2] Not only did he acquiesce, but decided the movement should be put in hand at once. There had been a question whether it should be postponed for a while to complete the destruction of the Canadian harvest, and permit Amherst to push his advance further forward. This point the brigadiers declared themselves incompetent to decide. They left it to their chief, and he gave the word for immediate action on the morrow, that is, the 31st. The admiral and the brigadiers met the general for a final council at Montmorenci, and after the consultation, orders were issued for the evacuation to begin.[3] It was at once taken in hand, and by that night

[1] "Answer of the Brigadiers," Doughty, vol. vi. p. 92; *Newcastle Papers, Add. MSS.* 32,895, f. 92.

[2] Wright, p. 551.

[3] "Aug. 31. . . . The admiral came on shore this morning, when General Wolfe and the three brigadiers and he had a consultation. In consequence of it and the former one that the brigadiers had, orders were immediately given out for all the artillery and stores to be carried away from this camp." —Doughty, vol. v. p. 262, *Townshend's Diary.*

the whole of the heavy guns and stores were secretly passed over to Point Lévis.

The effect of this resolution on the position of the fleet was serious. No one anticipated a rapid success. Victuals for a month—and some say two months—were to be sent up, and it was clear that the near approach of the autumn made it impossible for the large ships of the line to await the termination of operations so prolonged. Moreover, for the work above the town they could be of no use, and Saunders appears to have decided, as a condition of his assent to the prolongation of the campaign, that Durell must be sent home at once with the heaviest ships.[1] The other naval movements necessitated by the new line of operations had already begun. On the 27th the wind, which had blown obstinately down the river for nearly the whole month, shifted to the eastward, and that night the *Lowestoft* and *Hunter*, with their attendant sloops and victuallers, which had been waiting for their chance for over three weeks, weighed for their fourth attempt to get up. The French naval gunners were by this time far up the river on their way to Batiscan, and the little squadron passed up almost unscathed to join the ships above.[2] According to Wolfe, it was the fact of more ships and provisions having got above the town that induced the brigadiers to advise their change of plan. It

[1] This important resolution appears in a letter from Saunders to Townshend, written on Sept. 13, immediately after the battle of Abraham. "I have had," he says, "the despatches General Wolfe sent me to go with the great ships. They are not gone, and I shall keep them till I have yours" (Doughty, vol. v. p. 197). One of the despatches mentioned must be that which Wolfe wrote to Holderness on Sept. 9. At the close of his despatch to the Admiralty, dated Sept. 5, Saunders informed them of his resolution. "I shall very soon send home the great ships" (*ibid.*, vol. vii. p. 117).

[2] Vaudreuil to Bougainville, Aug. 29. "I am longing for the sailors to return and man the town batteries again. Without them they will do very badly, as we found out the day before yesterday."—Doughty, vol. iv. p. 77.

may well have been his own reason for acquiescing. Saunders immediately drove home the point by ordering up the *Seahorse* (24) with two more armed sloops and as many victuallers, and they too all passed above in safety on the night of the 31st.[1]

In the French camp the effect of these movements was to complete the confusion for which Wolfe had been working so long. Montcalm, after his dash to Bougainville's assistance, had settled down in his entrenchments more stolidly than ever, as though annoyed with himself for having let Wolfe draw him. He knew perfectly well the game his adversary was playing, and a determination not to be fooled again seems to have possessed him, which had much to do with his final defeat. Vaudreuil, on the other hand, as head of both army and navy, became nervously active. His first step when the *Lowestoft* and *Hunter* got up was to countermand the intended naval attack, and recall the whole of the seamen from Batiscan. He had convinced himself that Quebec itself was about to be assaulted, and at the same time he went so far as to recall Bougainville and all his force to the defence of the town. Scarcely had these orders been issued when Vaudreuil on reflection thought that the special object of the British movement might be to make him recall Bougainville, so as to permit them to get a footing above the town. It might also be a ruse to compel him to

[1] Saunders in his despatch says, "I sent up on the 29th at night the *Seahorse*," &c. But according to the *Seahorse's* log she did not go up till the night of the 31st (see Professor Laughton's article in the *Edinburgh Review*, July 1903, p. 148. Attention is there called for the first time to the importance of the logs of the ships, which Mr. Doughty unfortunately omitted from his collection of documents.) *Townshend's Diary* also places the passage of the *Seahorse* at midnight on the 31st. Possibly Saunders had the 29th in his mind as the date on which the movement was decided in principle. He may have actually issued the *Seahorse's* orders on that day, after his second conference with the brigadiers.

reinforce Bougainville, and finally it might mean an attack on the ships and magazines above the Richelieu Rapids. Eventually Bougainville, who already had the whole of the regular grenadier companies, was told he might keep half the crews to man the frigates and protect the magazines, while Vaudreuil himself secured the landing-places immediately above Quebec, by making a further call on Montcalm's regulars to furnish pickets along the Heights of Abraham.

Next day all was changed. The British squadron had been demonstrating before St. Augustine, between Cap Rouge and Point aux Trembles, where was an important corn-mill. Satisfied that this was the British objective, Vaudreuil decided to recall his line pickets from the Abraham posts and substitute militia. So the game went on, with perpetual cancelling of orders and incessant counter-marches that bewildered and exhausted every one. As the movements which the decision of the British brigadiers entailed began to declare themselves the confusion was redoubled. Rous, whom Holmes had left in command of the upper squadron, had drawn Bougainville as high as Point aux Trembles, but when the *Seahorse* and her consort passed up he dropped down again to Cap Rouge. At the same time the camp at Montmorenci was disappearing, and there was a great movement of boats in the basin. Vaudreuil again winded an attack on Beauport, and in the morning gave orders accordingly. At 2.30, however, he was sure it was a ruse to mask an attack high up the river at Jacques Cartier or even Deschambault. At 5.30 he believed that the movement of the ships above was only a feint, and he recalled some of Bougainville's best troops, while before night he was bidding him again to mass his force at Point aux Trembles and St. Augustine.

Still for the French troops there was no rest. Early next morning they found that Rous had dropped still further down to St. Michaël, and Bougainville had to march his weary men to be ready for them there. On September 3rd came the final evacuation of Montmorenci. Townshend's troops had withdrawn from all the advanced posts and were apparently exposed to a crushing attack. Montcalm's officers were urging him to make the attempt. He steadfastly refused. From this moment we seem to enter a desperate contest of character—which makes for so much in the last hours of a military crisis. We seem to see that Wolfe, having at his back all the strategical resource which the fleet gave him over and above Montcalm, was gradually dominating his adversary. The harassed French general was being reduced to a mental condition which convinced him that every movement of his opponent meant the opposite of what it seemed to mean. In this case Montcalm was right. Wolfe, as he withdrew his force from Montmorenci, had in fact laid a cunning trap for him—his last despairing effort to bring on an action in his own way. It failed to entice Montcalm. He would not move, and Wolfe proceeded to complete the embarkation. Then was Montcalm's opportunity and he seized it. The moment Wolfe was committed to the movement he set troops in motion to fall upon him. But Wolfe was prepared, and once again he was to demonstrate the incalculable unity which the water gave to his apparently divided force. Saunders was already laying out buoys opposite Beauport, and Monckton, so soon as he saw the French troops in motion, rapidly embarked his brigade in boats that were ready at Lévis. At the same time the troops at Montmorenci formed as though about to take part in Monckton's threatened

attack. Montcalm saw himself confronted with a repetition of the attack of July 31st, and the movement he was making to harass Wolfe's re-embarkation had to be stopped. This time he was wrong. The movements of Saunders and Monckton were only a well-prepared demonstration, and under cover of it the evacuation of Montmorenci was completed without interruption.

The actual advance upon the new line of operation above the town began to develop on September 5th. All the troops, except a small garrison under Carleton to hold Orléans, had been gathered at Lévis, and a brigade marched up that evening to embark at a point a little above the Echemin River beyond Gorham's post. Holmes, who again resumed the command of the Upper Squadron, was waiting for them opposite St. Michael, and Bougainville was still watching him. Montcalm saw the movement, and felt compelled, in spite of himself, to reinforce Bougainville still further. For some days past the regiment of Guienne, one of Montcalm's precious regular battalions, had been placed at his disposal, and had been marched out of camp each day to a point under the walls of the town, where it covered the Abraham landing-places, and was at hand for work either above or below the town. Volunteers from all the other royal battalions were now added with their grenadier companies to stiffen and strengthen Bougainville's flying column. But Montcalm was ill at ease. Wolfe's domination was increasing. He wrote to warn Bougainville of the reinforcements that were coming, but immediately added, "Mr. Wolfe is just the man to double back in the night." Then he cautioned him on the other hand that the ships would probably remain where they were to fix his attention with a cannonade while the troops stole a march on him in the boats and struck higher up. Vaudreuil on his part was

certain a serious attack on the line of communication was coming, and ordered Bougainville to follow every movement of the flotilla. For this purpose his flying column was brought up to over two thousand men, besides about five hundred to watch the landing-places.[1]

The British movement continued on the 6th, and by the evening of that day the whole of the available troops were on board the squadron. But they were no longer in the hands of the brigadiers. By that time Wolfe had sufficiently recovered to resume the command, and was in Holmes's flagship. After leaving garrisons at Orléans and Lévis, and allowing for distant raiding-parties that had not come in, the available troops numbered less than four thousand men. So soon as they had all been crowded into the cruisers and transports, the whole squadron moved up with the evening tide to Cap Rouge, and Bougainville had to cover the eight or nine miles that lay between him and that place; but it was not with his whole flying column. The regiment of Guienne, which was its backbone, had returned to Montcalm's camp. Vaudreuil told Bougainville he was ready to send it back to him if he could not do without it, but it was a heavy regiment unfit to patrol the communications, and work with the flying column would soon exhaust it. He proposed, therefore, to station it as before to cover the town and the Anse des Mères, which was the landing-place immediately above it. There were

[1] Montcalm to Bougainville, and Vaudreuil to same, Sept. 5, Doughty, vol. iv. pp. 94–7. In view of the question of how far the final attack was a surprise, the details of the pickets are interesting.

Anse des Mères to Anse du Foulon	150 men.
Samos Battery	30 ,,
St. Michael	50 ,,
Sillery	50 ,,
Cap Rouge	200 ,,

difficulties, however, about this disposition, and the regiment remained in camp. Its loss entailed a reorganisation of Bougainville's flying column, and it was found necessary to withdraw fifty men from Anse des Mères and the Foulon. Thus eventually, owing to the pressure exerted by the ships higher up, the two important landing-places immediately above the town were left with a militia guard of a hundred men, and they were a mile and a half apart.[1]

Afterwards this arrangement was regarded even by the British as a stroke of luck. It was really the result of strategical law. Wolfe, by giving his force its extreme mobility—that is, by getting it afloat—was bringing out the full weakness of the defensive attitude to which Montcalm clung. For the French to watch every possible point of attack would be to split up their force into impotency. It forced them to choose the two most probable eventualities and concentrate their attention upon them. As Montcalm wrote to Bougainville, the British movements were "as embarrassing as they were equivocal," but he and every one else had come to the conclusion that they meant either an attack on the communications or a feint preluding a double back upon Beauport. On these lines the whole of the French dispositions settled down. Montcalm, with the bulk of the army, held the Beauport position, the only change being that, since Montmorenci was abandoned, he was able to draw in his left and close on Quebec, and was thus nearer for action above the town. There Bougainville was given practically a free hand to guard the long line of communications, and to parry the expected blow till Montcalm could come to his relief.

The justification of the French strategy is that it

[1] Vaudreuil to Bougainville, Sept. 6, 11 A.M., Doughty, vol. iv. p. 99.

coincided very closely with their enemy's. The idea of the brigadiers, as set out in their plan of operation, was to effect a landing by a *coup de main* a little above Cap Rouge, where the French were now forming a magazine, and to compel Montcalm to come to Bougainville's rescue. At Cap Rouge, therefore, Wolfe's striking force was assembled on the 7th, but finding it was expected, he made a reconnaissance higher up with his brigadiers in the *Hunter* sloop, and decided to attempt a landing a little below Trembles on the 9th. The following day was spent in organising the force for the attack. But the weather broke. A deluge of rain once more rendered all operations impossible, and as the troops could not be kept crowded in the ships any longer, it was decided to land the greater part of them on the south shore at St. Nicholas, very nearly opposite Cap Rouge. This operation, which completely puzzled the French, held Bougainville where he was. Montcalm suspected it meant a repetition of Murray's raid high up the river, and assured his lieutenant he should not be deprived of a single man so long as the English were facing him. Bougainville's position was distracting enough. At his wits' end to feed his own men, he was continually pestered by the commissariat to get stores through to Quebec. For, since the *Hunter* had gone up to Trembles, boats could not get down even to Cap Rouge. Incessant marching had destroyed the boots of his men so that they could hardly move, and in his front was a man whose cunning even his chief could not fathom.

Even then that cunning was at work on a wholly new scheme. It was one that differed fundamentally from that of the brigadiers, though they and those who afterwards credited them with the final success appear never

to have grasped how great and vital the difference was. Since Wolfe had been above the town, scraps of information and the general indications had convinced him that at last he had profoundly modified Montcalm's position, and exposed him to the most telling stroke which one general can deal another. Hitherto all attempts had been directed against one or the other flank of the French. Wolfe had pinned his faith on the left flank, the brigadiers on the right, since that form of attack also involved breaking the French communications. What Wolfe perceived was that although the brigadiers' scheme had failed as a *coup de main*, it had had the effect of drawing a large portion of Montcalm's force far to his right. Wolfe appears to have divined that the result of Montcalm's clinging to Beauport, and of his own present position threatening Trembles and Cap Rouge, would be a gap in the French centre. Could he but suddenly thrust his whole force into this gap, Montcalm and Quebec would be at his mercy. It was a stroke of genius, an example of a penetrating *coup d'œil* as subtle as the plan of the brigadiers was obvious; and if Wolfe deserves the name of a master of amphibious warfare, it is above all because by handling his force amphibiously he made the opportunity and was able to use it.[1]

Without breathing a word of what was in his mind—and possibly had been in his mind for some time—he stole down the river on the 9th, the day he ordered the

[1] The indications of Wolfe's mind which survive are as follows: Townshend says in his *Diary*, Sept. 10, "By some intelligence the general had he had changed his mind as to the place he intended to land." On the 12th he writes: "The general gave out in the orders of the day the intelligence he had about the division of the enemy's forces." This order of the day began with the words, "The enemy's force is now divided."

troops to land, to look again at the landing-places immediately above Quebec. By climbing a height just below the mouth of the Echemin River he was able to see the Anse du Foulon and most of the ground between it and the town walls. It was bare of troops, except that just above the Foulon there were about a dozen tents with an abattis below them. The path up the cliff had been broken, but about two hundred yards to the right there seemed to be a slope that might be practicable for light infantry. The guard he put down at about a hundred men, and he made up his mind that in spite of them he might by a sudden stroke thrust himself in.[1] No council of war was held. On his return to the flagship, which was lying a little above Cap Rouge, he simply informed the brigadiers of his intention to land at Anse du Foulon; and next day he took two of them down with some of the staff to explain what their duty would be. Holmes went too, and Captain Chads, the officer whom Saunders had selected to conduct the flotilla. Thither also came Colonel Burton to meet them from Lévis. A point which recommended the operation particularly to Wolfe was that the reserves left at Orléans and Lévis would be at hand to support it. In other words, it permitted a concentration of the whole British force, which under the brigadiers' plan was impossible.[2]

Secrecy was of course of the last importance, and to avoid arousing suspicion the generals and staff borrowed grenadier overcoats to hide their uniforms; but the vigilance of the French officer in command at Sillery

[1] *Moncrieff's Journal*, Doughty, vol. v. p. 49, and Wolfe to Monckton, Sept. 12, *ibid.*, vol. vi. p. 60. Major Moncrieff was present at the staff reconnaissance next day.

[2] Wolfe to Burton, Sept. 10.—Wright, p. 568.

penetrated the trick, and on the 11th he sent word to Bougainville that an important reconnaissance had been made the previous evening by some high officer near Gorham's post.[1] No attention, however, was paid to his warning. Bougainville was absorbed in securing his position between Trembles and Cap Rouge, and in providing an escort for a convoy of victual-boats that were about to come down the river. No change, therefore, was made in the general dispositions, and the Abraham posts remained in their denuded condition. On the 11th the whole affair was arranged. The first landing to surprise the Foulon guard was to be of 400 light infantry under Colonel Howe, and supported by 1300 men under Monckton and Murray. This force of 1700 was all the boats could carry at one trip. The remainder, amounting to 1900 men, were to follow down in the ships and anchor as near the landing-place as they could. Then were to come the ordnance ships with artillery and entrenching tools; and finally Carleton and Burton were ordered to march up every man they could spare, amounting to about twelve hundred, and to be ready to embark the moment the second landing was complete.

When Wolfe's officers knew their own scheme was to be cast aside for this desperate venture, they were seized with something like dismay. Holmes was as bad as the rest. From lack of strategical insight, he was blind to the conditions which in Wolfe's mind justified the hazardous attempt at that moment and at none other. "This alteration of the plan of operations," he wrote, "was not approved by many beside himself. It had been proposed

[1] Remigny à Bougainville, Sillery, le 11e matin. He saw three boats come down with "beaucoup d'officiers vetus de plusieurs couleurs. Il y en avait un qui dessous un surtout bleu était fort galonné, &c. . . . Ils reconnurent le terrain, planterent quelque javelons," and returned to their boats about 6 P.M.—Doughty, vol. iv. p. 121.

to him a month before, when the first ships passed the town, and when it was entirely defenceless and unguarded. . . . He now laid hold of it when it was highly improbable he should succeed. . . . The care of landing the troops and sustaining them by the ships fell to my share—the most hazardous and difficult task I was ever engaged in. For the distance of the landing-place [it was fifteen miles from St. Nicholas and about ten from Cap Rouge], the impetuosity of the tide, the darkness of the night, and the great chance of exactly hitting the very spot intended without discovery or alarm, made the whole extremely difficult."[1] The operation was fixed for the night of the 12th, and by the evening of that day the brigadiers were in a state of anxiety that came as near to insubordination as such fine soldiers could approach. They even went so far as to draw up a formal remonstrance and send it to Wolfe, protesting they were not sufficiently instructed, did not know where the landing was to be, and begging for more precise orders. To Monckton, who was to command the first division, Wolfe sent a patient answer, giving exact details of the landing-place and of how the operation was to be conducted; but he left him in no doubt, his mind was irrevocably made up. "I had the honour to inform you to-day," he concluded, "that it is my duty to attack the French army. To the best of my knowledge and abilities, I have fixed upon that spot where we can act with the most force, and are most likely to succeed. If I am mistaken, I am sorry for it, and must be answerable to his Majesty and the public for the consequences." To Townshend, who commanded the supporting division, he replied more tartly: "General Monckton is charged with the first landing and attack at the Foulon. If he succeeds, you will be pleased to give

[1] Doughty, vol. iv. p. 296.

directions that the troops afloat be set on shore with the utmost expedition."

Wolfe wrote these letters at half-past eight, only half-an-hour before the first division of the troops was ordered to take to the boats. The whole force had been re-embarked in the ships since the morning; for it was Wolfe's intention before striking his blow to endeavour to emphasise the gap in the French centre, upon which his scheme rested, by two feints. Below the town, Saunders was preparing a demonstration against Beauport. Every available marine was got into the boats, while his smaller vessels worked out in mid-stream as though to threaten a cannonade of the French position. The effect was to hold Montcalm firmly where he was till the last moment. Wolfe designed a corresponding demonstration above. "To-morrow," he wrote to Burton, "the troops re-embark, [and] the fleet sails up the river a little higher, as if intending to land above upon the north shore." How far this demonstration was carried out is uncertain, but the intention reveals very clearly the tactical idea that was in Wolfe's mind. Whatever was actually done, Bougainville's attention, as completely as Montcalm's, was certainly kept diverted from the centre till nine o'clock on the following morning.[1]

With the final embarkation of the troops, the operation fell into the hands of Holmes and his officers. The judgment required of him, as he so keenly felt, was almost beyond human power. To carry out the plan as designed,

[1] Wright, p. 569. There is some doubt whether this movement was ever made, since it is not mentioned in the logs of the *Sutherland* or the *Lowestoft*. (See *Edinburgh Review*, July 1903.) Foligné says it was made, and had the effect of drawing Bougainville up as high as Trembles, but the passage is confused and shows Foligné had a very inaccurate idea of what was going on (Doughty, vol. iv. p. 208). Holmes does not mention it in his despatch, but Townshend in his distinctly says: "After some

he was expected to bring the first division of the boats off the appointed place, ten or fifteen miles away, in the dark, and on a racing tide, just before daybreak. A task more delicate and trying can hardly be imagined. But if Holmes quailed before it, he did not flinch. His nerve held firm, and his calculation was exact. At 1.30 he signalled for the boats to gather round the *Sutherland*, and at 2.0 they were cast off down the river. Half-an-hour later the signal was made for the armed sloops to follow. Then, leaving the *Sutherland* where she was "to keep an eye on the enemy's motions, their floating batteries, and small craft," he shifted his flag to the *Lowestoft*, and at 3.0 went down with the other frigates and transports. The whole went like clockwork, and so silently that the enemy had not a suspicion of what was going on. The most difficult task was Captain Chads's, who had the actual direction of the boats. Wolfe had done his best for him by strictly enjoining in general orders "that no officer must attempt to make the least alteration, or interfere with Captain Chads's peculiar province." Thus, left with an absolutely free hand, he accomplished his incredible task with extraordinary success, though there was one unforeseen moment when all was on the point of being lost.

On the 9th, before Wolfe made his first reconnaissance, his adjutant-general, in coming up from Lévis, had been chased by French boats. Holmes, therefore, had sent down the *Hunter* sloop to preserve the communications.

movements of the ships by Admiral Holmes to draw the attention of the enemy up the river the boats fell down." Marcel, Montcalm's aide-de-camp, also says, in explaining Bougainville's inaction, "L'enemi qui avoit voulu lui masquer ses mouvements, le tenoit en échec par ses vaisseaux et nombre de berges qui faisoient mine de vouloir débarquer."—*Journal Abrégé*, Doughty, vol. v. p. 297. It seems clear, then, that something was done.

Lying half-way down, it appears she had not received the general orders, but on the other hand, by some means or other—perhaps from overhearing the French sentries along the bank—she had found out that there was to be an attempt that night to pass down the commissariat boats from Cap Rouge. Quebec and Beauport since the interruption of the line of supply were on the point of famine, and that very day Bougainville had received an urgent appeal from headquarters to forward a convoy of victuals under escort.[1] It was of this the *Hunter* had got wind. She was apparently lying close in to the shore to intercept her prey, and naturally took Chads's boats for those she was expecting. Fortunately all was explained in time, and what was even better, the British officers obtained possession of information which enabled them to pass the sentries without raising the alarm. To the first challenge they replied they were the commissariat boats, and that the sentry had better hold his tongue for fear of giving the English the alarm. The trick was entirely successful, and they were not challenged again. Punctually to time Chads was abreast the appointed spot, and gave the word to row in. The force of the tide had made him overshoot the Foulon by a little, but with that exception he had performed his almost impossible task to the letter. As it was, the mistake made no difference. The forlorn hope of light infantry immediately began to scale the towering cliff where they stood, quickly reached the top, and overpowered the guard. The rest of the troops were landed, and leaving them to make their way up, the boats went off to the frigates and transports which were by this time arriving. The Samos and Sillery batteries had begun to give them trouble, but they were quickly taken in reverse by the light infantry above and

[1] Cadet to Bougainville, Sept. 12.—Doughty, vol. iv. p. 126.

silenced. So soon as the second division were landed, the boats hastened across the river to pick up Burton's corps, which had duly arrived by land from Lévis. So the whole of the difficult combination was accomplished; and so securely were Bougainville and Montcalm held away, that it was accomplished without interruption from either.

With the landing of the troops, the task of the bluejackets was far from done. There remained the guns; and hour after hour, as dawn passed into day, they were hauling them with ungrudging labour up the precipitous path. Their toil was still in full swing when the famous action above began. First the dropping shots, as Montcalm, hurrying from Beauport, pushed forward his skirmishers while he formed his line; then the defiant shouts and increasing fire as he advanced gallantly against the silent and motionless ranks of Wolfe—silent and motionless till the excited enemy were within thirty paces. Then came the sound of those memorable volleys of the whole British line—one—two—and at last a third, followed by the cries of triumph and despair as the French broke, and with bayonet and claymore the pursuit began. Through it all, the bluejackets were toiling with unflagging energy at the guns, and again the silence of the sea covers all. They felt and endured, while their comrades reaped the harvest they had toiled so hard and long to prepare.

"At 7.0," so runs the log of the *Lowestoft*, "anchored in 9 fathoms low water; Point Diamond NE.; Point Lévis NE. ½ E.; Point Sillery NW. by W. Distance of N. shore ½ mile. Landed all the troops on the north shore. At 10.0 our troops began a general action with the French. . . . At 11.0 was brought on board the corpse of General Wolfe." So stands recorded in the book

of Holmes's flagship that pregnant hour in which the crisis of the war was reached. By noon it had passed.

Hurrying over the St. Charles bridge from Beauport the moment he heard the alarm, Montcalm and his officers had resolved to attack what he saw in front of him. For this decision he has often been censured. After deducting runaway militia, the troops with Bougainville and the guards which Saunders's demonstration forced him to leave in the Beauport position, his force even numerically cannot have exceeded Wolfe's five thousand by many hundreds. In quality it was much inferior. The pick of his line troops were with Bougainville, and half his force must have been militia untrained for regular operations in the open. It is said, therefore, that he should have waited for Bougainville's support. But in truth he had no choice. It was not likely that Wolfe, impetuous in tactics as he was patient in strategy, would give him the time. Montcalm must either attack at once or suffer an attack by an almost equal force of highly-trained veteran infantry, tingling with the exhilaration of a brilliant exploit. With such troops as his there was no choice. They had been suddenly called from entrenchments on which for months they had been taught to rely. To curb their first ardour and suffer an attack in the open was to see his motley force rolled up and flung into the St. Charles. Besides, he could not tell that Wolfe had performed so incredible a feat as to get his whole army there since dawn. He could not tell how large was the force before him. All he knew was that waiting might increase it, and could not make it less. Was there not also every reason to believe that Bougainville must appear at any moment? Indeed there was no choice. The perfection of Wolfe's plan left him none. Could every general who suffers an enemy to pierce his centre wait till he can

combine a front and rear attack with his severed wings, then interposition as a tactical stroke would lose the deadly character it has earned. There was little hope for Montcalm to retrieve what he had lost, but he took the boldest and most likely chance.

Still, even that could avail him nothing. Wolfe well knew—and even boasted—Montcalm's motley force could not stand before men trained and tempered like his own. Such perfect fire discipline as Wolfe's training powers had given his troops was almost without precedent, and the French were swept away like dust before it. Montcalm fell—a panic seized his troops—there was a *sauve qui peut*, from the Gate of Quebec and the bridge over the St. Charles. Luckily for the routed army, Wolfe too was lying on the plain, gasping out his life in happy knowledge of his victory. But for that the pursuit must have wrung from Montcalm the whole stake for which he had played heroically in his last throw. Monckton fell too, and Townshend, on whom the command devolved, devoted himself to securing the ground that had been won and turning an impenetrable face to Bougainville.

Neither he nor any one else could yet tell the crisis was passed. "As I have not heard how you are situated," wrote Saunders to Townshend immediately after the action, "I have sent all the 24-pounders with their ammunition that I had boats for." He also held back Durell's sailing orders, and flung himself heart and soul into securing the fruits of his dead colleague's victory. In the confusion which followed the action, Vaudreuil had decided to abandon Quebec to its garrison for a time, and withdraw to Jacques Cartier to reorganise his shattered army for its relief. From Montreal the Chevalier de Lévis hurried to take Montcalm's place, and there was not a moment to lose in forcing the place to surrender

before the new commander-in-chief could act. While all the energy of the troops was devoted to making approaches and batteries, that of the seamen was spent in the exhausting work of getting up the siege-guns to arm them. By the end of the week over a hundred guns and mortars were on the heights, and on the 17th Saunders added his own batteries by moving his ships of the line into the basin within range of the Lower Town. The threat was more than the dispirited and half-starved garrison could endure. In vain a messenger from the Chevalier de Lévis arrived with assurance that relief was at hand. On the 28th they surrendered and the British troops marched into the Upper Town, while the sailors occupied the Lower.

So in the moment of triumph the last touch was given to that remarkable harmony between the services, both in spirit and action, which had been the conspicuous feature of the campaign, and the main cause of its success. As it began, so it ended. All the last critical week the seamen had been slaving at every kind of fatigue that their comrades of the army might be fresh to meet the expected enemy. "The admiral," wrote Townshend in his order of the day, issued after the action, "has promised the continuance of all the assistance which the naval service can spare, to ease the troops of the fatigues, which the further operations will require of us."[1] The promise was kept to the full, and in the concluding words of his despatch Townshend handsomely acknowledged the debt. "I should be wanting," he said, "in paying my due respects to the admirals and naval service if I neglected this occasion of acknowledging how much we are indebted for our success to the constant assistance and support received, and the perfect harmony and corre-

[1] Knox, vol. ii. p. 76.

spondence which has prevailed throughout all our operations in the uncommon difficulties which the nature of this country in particular presents to military operations of a great extent, and which no army can in itself solely supply. The immense labour on the transportation of artillery stores and provisions, the long watchings in boats, the drawing of our artillery even in the heat of the action, it is my duty, short as my command has been, to acknowledge for that time how great a share the navy has had in this successful campaign."

Of that share Saunders in his reserved way claimed little. In his despatch he confined himself to a quiet commendation of the management of the landing. "Considering," he wrote, "the darkness of the night and the rapidity of the current, this was a very critical operation very properly and successfully conducted." But he went on as though he thought the feat which the troops had accomplished overshadowed everything. "The difficulty," he said, "of gaining the top of the hill is scarce credible. It was very steep in the ascent and high, had no path where two could go abreast, but they were obliged to pull themselves up by the stumps and boughs of trees."[1] It was no wonder that with this spirit prevailing he could assure their lordships "that during the tedious campaign there has continued a perfect good understanding between the army and navy."

The despatch concluded with the arrangements he was making for the fleet. "Admiral Durell," he wrote, "will sail for England with the greatest ships in two or three days, and I shall myself follow as soon as possible, leaving at Halifax Lord Colville in the *Northumberland* with four more ships of the line and two or three frigates, with orders to come up here as early in the spring as possible."

[1] Saunders to the Admiralty, Sept. 21, Doughty, vol. vi. p. 120.

The fact was that Saunders was by no means satisfied with the way the fleet had done its part of the work. The ships which Durell had let in were still up the river untouched, and the surrendered French officers assured their captors that their defence had rested entirely on the supplies the ships had brought. Had they not got in, they said, the town would have surrendered as soon as the batteries opened and honour had been satisfied by suffering the opening of a bombardment. Saunders was itching to be at the French frigates and storeships before he sailed, but again he had to subordinate his own desire to the interests of the army. The whole of it except the grenadier companies of the Louisbourg garrison, and most of the militia, was to be left under Murray and Burton to keep the conquest. The force numbered over seven thousand men, and Saunders found the labour of all his boats and the whole of his attention would barely suffice to supply it with provisions and stores for the winter. It was only with the boats that the French ships could be reached. So when Saunders sent his final despatch to Pitt it was with an apology for having been obliged to leave his work unfinished.[1] For a week longer he clung to his post. Durell had gone. Holmes was going, and on October 11th Saunders issued his last order. It was to Captain Spry of the *Oxford* (66) to remain behind with eight sloops and armed vessels to watch the French ships as long as the season would permit.[2]

So the memorable campaign came to an end. It is usually regarded as one of the most successful in our annals, and yet its success was very limited. While we

[1] Saunders to Pitt, Oct. 5, *S.P. Colonial* (*America and West Indies*), 88.

[2] Saunders to Fry, Oct. 11, *ibid.* According to the lists, &c., the captain of the *Oxford* was Spry, not Fry. His vessel apparently remained in the river till the end of the month, for Knox says it was not till the 26th that Monckton went down to embark in it for New York.

barely achieved what we had had all the means of achieving two campaigns before, the French gained even more than they hoped. They had saved the colony for yet another year. This was all that was expected from Bougainville's mission home, and all that had been fixed as their object at the council of war held on his return in May. Could they only hold Quebec till the end of August, it would be impossible for the British to penetrate further so as to join hands with Amherst and complete the reduction of the colony.[1] Not only had they held the place till the middle of September, but they had succeeded in stopping altogether the advance of Amherst. In both cases the success was due to their habitual skill in using the naval defensive, so as to dispute the control of passage and communication till the last moment. When Amherst got possession of Ticonderoga he found Bourlamaque, who had established himself at the foot of the lake, had vessels which would enable him to dispute the line of advance, and Amherst decided he could not move till he had built a flotilla capable of dominating them. The whole season was consumed before the vessels could act, and so Montreal was preserved, and the remarkable resistance of the French prolonged for another year. In the same way, in the St. Lawrence, Wolfe might well have begun his operations above the town earlier had it not been for the frigates which had got up and rendered the control of the upper river insecure. The fact that they still lay untouched was the gravest feature of the situation. Throughout the winter and spring the garrison would have to defend itself with the control of the river in the enemy's hands. Even what had been gained might well be lost again before the ice would permit Colville

[1] *Dispositions générales*, &c., Knox, vol. ii. p. 120.

to return with the Halifax squadron. Surely never was the result of a campaign, nay even of a war, more nearly lost by the neglect of one man than was that of Quebec by Durell's indolent failure to do his utmost to carry out his orders. The honours of Quebec are great, but they must be divided with the French, if only for the clever way in which they took advantage of our mistake at sea.

The feat which the French privateers accomplished in forcing their way through the ice ahead of our advanced division was a brilliant one, but what Saunders had accomplished quite overshadowed it. To carry such a fleet as his up such a river, to maintain it there for three months in spite of gales and batteries and two attacks by fireships, to preserve it in perfect harmony with the sister service, to judge and take every risk soberly and yet to the extremity of daring; and finally, to bring it forth again at the last moment with the loss of but one ship, was a stroke of conduct without parallel. It is enough to have placed him in the first rank of sea commanders. But by the frailty of human judgment such a place can only be won by a successful action—a test which often has not called forth a tithe of the admiralship which Saunders's more sober triumph entailed. Though he lacked the genius of Wolfe, his hand throughout was the surer of the two; and, dazzling as was the final stroke by which Wolfe snatched victory from failure, the steadier flame of Saunders's exploit is worthy to burn beside it without loss of radiance for all time.

END OF VOL. I

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MAP OF
NORTH WESTERN EUROPE
to illustrate the disturbance of continental strategy by British action from the sea
Statute Miles
0 100 200
Reference
Great Britain & Hanover
Anglo-Hanoverian allies
France
Austria
Imperialist Austrian allies
Neutral States uncoloured
ATLANTIC OCEAN
NORTH SEA
BALTIC SEA
SCOTLAND
IRELAND
ENGLAND
NORWAY
(to Denmark)
SWEDEN
DENMARK
RUSSIA
PRUSSIA
POLAND
HANOVER
Holstein
Mecklenburg
Pomerania
Silesia
SAXONY
BOHEMIA
Moravia
Bavaria
Tyrol
Palatinate
Wurtemberg
Hesse
Westphalia
Brittany
Picardy
Artois
FRANCE
UNITED PROVINCES
AUSTRIAN NETH.
Christiania
Stockholm
Göteborg
Copenhagen
Memel
Königsberg
East Prussia
Danzig
Colberg
Rügen
Stralsund
Stettin
Thorn
Vistula
Warsaw
Berlin
Hamburg
Bremen
Amsterdam
The Hague
Antwerp
Brussels
Cologne
Dresden
Prague
Ratisbon
Munich
Stuttgart
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Nantes
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St Abbs Hd.
Carrickfergus
Isle of Man
Cork
Waterford
Lundy I.
St Georges Channel
Bristol Channel
Portland
Isle of Wight
Torbay
Chatham
R. Blackwater
Ushant
Alderney
Guernsey
Sark
Jersey
Ile de Bas (Batz)
Ile de Rhé
La Rochelle
Rochefort
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